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SECURITY SITUATION IN IRAQ AND SYRIA: U.S. POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

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SECURITY SITUATION IN IRAQ AND SYRIA: U.S. POLICY OPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC, Tuesday, July 29, 2014.

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:03 a.m., in room 2118, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (chairman of the committee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM CALIFORNIA, CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The CHAIRMAN. The committee will come to order. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. The committee meets to receive testimony on the security situation in Iraq and Syria, the implications for the region, and the United States policy options.

Our witnesses include Dr. Stephen Biddle, Dr. Max Boot, Mr. Brian Fishman, and former HASC [House Armed Services Committee] chairman, Duncan Hunter. I would like to thank Chairman Hunter for being here today. He—is this public?

VOICE. Yes, it is.

The CHAIRMAN. I was going to say that we pulled him off the golf course, but you can do that now. I know that your insights and experience will be extremely valuable for the committee. I don't know how many have read your book, but your knowledge of the situation is very relevant.

Also, I want to thank your son, who is not here yet, for his suggestion to get the perspectives of those who know Iraq best. It was his idea that we do this and I think it was a great one. And to draw from their extensive experience as we consider a way forward.

We have a superb panel today and we are working to secure time this fall to gain further insights from key military commanders who were on the ground in Iraq.

Mr. Hunter, Jr., like many of the veteran members of this committee who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan, has a unique viewpoint and a strong voice to bring to these deliberations and I appreciate his engagement and leadership.

The security situation in Iraq and Syria continues to worsen. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria [ISIS] now controls large swaths of terrain in the heart of the Middle East. In Iraq, Al-Anbar, Mosul, and Balad, all areas where countless young American men and women made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our security and to provide Iraqis a better future, have fallen under the ISIS control.

Iraqi security forces have folded upon contact with ISIS. Prime Minister Maliki has failed to create a coalition government and instead has chosen to send Shia militias into Sunni tribal areas to battle ISIS, exacerbating sectarian divides and violence.

Last night, I heard on the radio as I was driving home that the ISIS in the Mosul are destroying religious shrines, anything that symbolizes some great treasures that have existed for centuries. They are just going through and destroying.

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad remains in power. The moderate Syrian opposition has been marginalized, losing ground to both Assad and ISIS. And the foreign fighter threat has become a matter of homeland security. Meanwhile, Iran has taken advantage of this moment to further reinforce its only ally in the region, Bashar al-Assad, and expand its influence in Iraq and beyond.

The landscape is incredibly complex: the sanctuary that ISIS now enjoys, the expansion that Iran is trying to achieve in this moment, and the fragile stability of the region, together, presents strategic challenges for the United States security and our interest.

The administration's disengagement and inaction since declaring victory for leaving Iraq has been disturbing. I have urged the Obama administration to engage, to look at the region holistically, and to continue and to outline a comprehensive policy and strategy for the region.

However, thus far, largely what we have seen from this administration are statements on what it is not doing and proposals that lack the rigor to match the problem that we are facing. For example, we received a request for $1.5 billion for a Syria Stabilization Initiative in the fiscal year 2015 OCO [Overseas Contingency Operations] budget request that included no details.

I thought our Ranking Member Smith said it well when he told senior Defense officials that we want to be supportive, but sell us, give us something to work with. I acknowledge that there may be good options. At this point, we may be looking at the least bad of the bad options.

But we need more than inaction because we cannot tolerate ISIS having sanctuary, freedom of movement, and the platform to launch attacks against the United States and our allies. And our moral leadership should not allow us to stand idly by while sectarian war engulfs the region.

We are fortunate to have with us today a panel of seasoned, thoughtful experts to help the committee understand the complexity of the situation, examine the spectrum of possible courses of action, the benefits and risks of those actions, and the consequences of inaction.

Again, thank you all for being here today. I look forward to your testimony and your insights.

Mr. Smith.

[The prepared statement of Mr. McKeon can be found in the Appendix on page 39.]

STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think this hearing is incredibly important as well. We are struggling with a very, very difficult national security and policy challenge. And I think it is the complexity of the terrorist threat that has emerged.

You know, we, post-9/11, developed I think a very good and a very effective strategy and that we knew who was coming at us. It was Al Qaeda, their senior leadership.

As General McChrystal, I think, said at the time, it takes a network to beat a network. So we built a network, we figured it out, and I think did a very effective job of going after those who had plotted and planned 9/11 and the attacks that came prior to that. The threat at that time was in Afghanistan and Pakistan and it was fairly clear. As it moved to Yemen, we responded to that.

Now, the problem is, is that it has metastasized and we have groups, you know, spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa and into South Asia that are in alliance with Al Qaeda's ideology, you know, the violent extremism, the extreme Islamist approach that potentially threatens the West.

But how do we contain that? Which groups are the greatest threat? I mean, you can go from Boko Haram, from the groups in Mali, you know, AQAP [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula]. Now, we have the emergence of ISIL [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant] in Syria and Iraq.

So now we are spread very, very thin and then we have also got, you know, individual lone actors that come out of this, folks who, you know, sign up for the jihad and then come back home, as we saw in the attack in Belgium.

It is a very, very complicated picture to try to figure out how we confront that. At the end of the day, it is simple to say that what we need to do is we need to win the ideological war. We need to defeat the violent extremist ideology that is giving life to all of these various different movements that are threatening governments. But how do you do that?

And I think the particularly vexing part about it is that the U.S., in pretty much all of the parts of the world where this problem is most rampant, we do not have much credibility with anybody.

We don't have the ability to walk in and say we are going to fix this because there just isn't U.S. credibility in those parts of the world. We could argue about why. It doesn't, at this point, really matter why. It is just a policy reality that we have to deal with as we try to figure out how do we influence things in Egypt?

I was struck that during the course of the conflict there between the Muslim Brotherhood and the military folks, both sides wanted to claim that the other side was in bed with the U.S. Basically, if you could prove that your opponent was affiliated with the United States, that undermined their credibility by definition. That gives you a full flavor of the problem and the challenge.

It was not just a matter of the President or anybody else standing up and saying, here is what the U.S. is going to do, we are going to step in and fix this. It is a far more subtle and difficult policy that we have to develop. Because I will agree with the chair-

man and I think the President agrees completely as well, this is a threat to our national security, beyond a doubt.

It is not something simply happening a long way away that we can afford to ignore. That is not the question. The question is, what do we do about it, what are the steps that we can take that will put us in a better position, because make no mistake about it, there are steps that we could take that would put us in a worse position.

It is not a matter that action is better than inaction. We have to be smart about what we do. And to do that, we are going to rely on the four of you to tell us exactly what those smart moves are. But it is a complex and vexing challenge.

And I look forward to the hearing today and I thank the chairman for conducting it. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith can be found in the Appendix on page 41.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Chairman Hunter.

Is your mic on?

STATEMENT OF HON. DUNCAN L. HUNTER, FORMER CHAIRMAN, HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

Mr. HUNTER. Great to be with you, and Mr. Ranking Member and all the members of the committee. This is the only committee that I would take the red-eye on to get back in time for this hearing from good old San Diego. It is good to be with folks that really care about national security. And this is a very timely hearing.

Let me get right to my point here. And I have had a very abbreviated statement that I gave, and I could expand a little bit pursuant to the question period. But I think it is instructive if we are trying to figure out how to retrieve the situation in Iraq to briefly review the history.

You know, we went in in March of 2003, Marines on the right, 3rd ID [Infantry Division] on the left, we had the 1st Armored Division of the U.K. appended to the Marines. They broke off into Basra. The drive to Baghdad took less than 20 days.

Saddam went down very quickly, but the occupation of Iraq proved to be very arduous, and that the Sunni population, approximately 30 percent of the populace, had the power, that was Iraq's—that was Saddam's tribe. They had the weapons, they had the know-how, the military know-how. They also knew how to make the trains run.

And when the Americans brought the idea of—that we were going to have "one man, one vote," the Sunnis could do the math, and we made a few missteps banning the Sunnis from high-level positions, disbanding the military totally, fairly precipitously, was a mistake in hindsight, but we worked through it.

And when you had the twin cauldrons of Fallujah and Ramadi go up, that initiated the Sunni wars in Anbar. And simultaneously, you had the Shiite wars, almost as if they were coordinated, although they were not, Muqtada al-Sadr took on America's allies and the United States in a number of locations in eastern Iraq. So you had two cauldrons going at the same time.

And there was fierce fighting in 2004, punctuated by the battle for Fallujah, the final battle for Fallujah in 2004. And in fact, I can

remember as a chairman of the committee, getting a call on a satellite cellphone in the First Battle of Fallujah. It was a Lieutenant Hunter who was cussing all of us for the Marines attacking and then being stopped by headquarters when they were—we were halfway through that battle.

And I assured him I would get right back with him when I talk to the Joint Chiefs. They didn't know what was happening. And in the end, they told me there was a pause and that pause lasted for 7 months. The bad guys regrouped and hit the static Marine positions. We took some casualties because of that.

So we had a—in the end, we took them out in the Second Battle for Fallujah in November, killed every Al Qaeda and every terrorist that didn't get out of Dodge or surrender.

So we had ups and downs, and that the Al Qaeda—or the Fallujah and Ramadi conflagrations basically ignited the Shiite wars—or the Sunni wars in western Iraq.

And we went into a very difficult period in 2004 and 2005 and 2006, but we adapted, as Americans do. And the key to winning that war, which we did in 2006, when the tribes came over on our side, was that we drove a wedge between Al Qaeda and the Sunni tribes.

As you may recall, Al Qaeda in Iraq was very brutal to the tribes, although they were allies against the Americans. They took their women, they taxed them heavily, they assassinated the sheiks who did not kow-tow to them. And the tribes, the shine of Al Qaeda, although they were fellow Sunnis, wore off with the tribes.

And at the same time, the Americans in between firefights built hospitals, built infrastructure, passed out humanitarian aid. In the early weeks of April of 2004, for example, Paul Kennedy, House liaison, Marine Corps colonel who commanded the 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines killed 300 terrorists in the early—in 3 days in the first week of April 2004. And on the fourth day, he held medical open house at the soccer stadium in Ramadi for all the old folks in Ramadi.

So here were the Americans fighting, but also trying to stitch the country together. And we were doing—the Army, was doing the same thing in eastern Iraq.

At one point—you know, that was September of 2006, Sheikh Sattar, he was kind of a mid-level sheikh of the Abu Risha tribe, and Ramadis held what I called the declaration of independence meeting with about 30 other tribal leaders. And he announced, under the protection of Sean MacFarland's guns who was the colonel of the regiment of the 1st Armored Division that was in Ramadi, he announced that he was coming over to the American side.

And within a few weeks, we had thousands of young tribesmen being directed by their leaders to come over on the U.S. side. And all of a sudden, the police force that we couldn't fill before was swelling with recruits.

And in the spring and summer of 2007, we crushed Al Qaeda in Anbar province. The United States successfully drove the wedge. And we did it with a lot of military leaders who developed good relationships with the tribal leaders.

General Allen went to Jordan and he retrieved Sheikh Abu Risha, who came back to his tribe in Karbala and turned his tribe against Al Qaeda.

John Kelly, who was liaison with this committee for a number of years, is now SOUTHCOM [U.S. Southern Command]. John Kelly ended up in very major positions in that and deployed, I believe, five times in Iraq, had extremely good relationships with the senior tribal leaders in Anbar province.

Joe L'Etoile went down into Zaidon, Lieutenant Colonel L'Etoile with 2nd and 7th Marines, and wiped out Al Qaeda in the Zaidon after he made friends with the Zobai tribe in the Zaidon, and he brought the 20th Revolutionary Brigade, which was the brigade that was of old time Sunni leaders, Sunni military leaders who were old Saddamists, who had resisted the British. They were patterned after the group that resisted the British in the 1920s. They were fighting us very effectively side-by-side with Al Qaeda in Anbar province in 2004, 2005. Joe L'Etoile brought them over to our side by a great counterinsurgency tactic of driving the wedge between them and Al Qaeda. They ended up helping us crush Al Qaeda.

The point I am making here is that, as ISIS today comes into Anbar province and is now embedding and having their way into cities that they have taken is very clearly intimidating the tribes.

And I don't have intelligence on the tribal leaders, what has happened to them, how many of them have been assassinated, how many of them have acquiesced. But the key to blunting the drive of ISIS in Anbar province is to retrieve the tribes, to develop some tribal resistance.

Now, what they had from the Americans in 2004, 2005, 2006, is what appeared to the tribal leaders to be a strong America, who all the way from the President on down to the corporal who was carrying a Mark IV, they had a commitment to be with them to the end, to endure. They viewed the American presence as strong, as enduring.

And in Iraq, you go with the winner. These are the folks that were occupied at one point by Genghis Khan. The contest was a primal contest. It was brutal and they wanted to know who was going to win. When it appeared to them that the Americans were not only treating them better, but that we were going to prevail, they came over to our side.

So if you apply that to today, to the situation today, I have got a couple of recommendations. One, you have got this great team of American leaders who have these long-lasting relationships with the tribal leaders of Anbar province and the rest of the country.

You had colonels like Sutherland who put together reconciliation of the tribes up in northern Iraq. You had obviously Sean MacFarland, who helped to broker the—help to pull Sattar into the position in which he came over to the American side.

You have John Kelly, a former—he was deputy commander of the 1st Marine Division in the invasion and was there at the end when we were taking less casualties than we were taking in Chicago, and in which congressional delegations were shopping in cities where you had had massive firefights in the old days.

John Kelly rode that horse to the very end. He has deep relationships with a number of tribal leaders. And those are assets that the United States has.

So my recommendation is, take these people with relationships and reengage them with the tribal leaders. You have to reengage them with something behind you, and what you need to have behind you is the will to arm those tribes, to arm the groups that came to us during the Awakening, that is anti-Al Qaeda groups that are made up of Sunnis.

And I agree that Mr. Maliki has squandered the good relationship that we built with Anbar province and with the Sunnis. But if we are to have a chance to blunt this occupation of a big piece of Iraq by ISIS, it is going to require participation of these tribes and their leaders.

So the President should assemble this team. He can pull them in and guys like Joe L'Etoile who left the service, you ought to pull them in, guys like John Kelly, instead of waiting for the next drug shipment out of Central America in his position in SOUTHCOM, have him head up the team.

You have got—you obviously need to employ David Petraeus, General Odierno, who have deep relationships with leaders in the present Government of Iraq, and especially military leaders, and lean on Maliki to empower the tribes.

He has totally surrendered that—all of the progress that we have made in terms of bringing the tribes on board and bringing the Sunni dimension into the Iraqi Government. So, reassemble the team, reengage with tribal leaders.

And lastly, you have got several very effective units. At least you had them at the end of the war, which we won in 2008. And that is the 1st Iraqi [Army] Division, for example. They went down to Basra at Maliki's insistence. They took on Muqtada al-Sadr, wiped out the Mahdi army. They pivoted and moved 400 miles to the northern and they stabilized Baqubah and Khanaqin and the regions along the Iranian border.

The 1st Iraqi Division was a very effective division. It had 250 American advisers. We should reassemble the adviser team, Mr. Chairman. Bob Castellvi, Colonel Bob—then Colonel Bob Castellvi was a top adviser. We ought to find out where he is at, bring him back. He had relationships with a number of the officers, including the commander of the 1st Iraqi Division.

And we should—obviously, we have done an assessment, I understand a military assessment has been done at the President and the Defense Secretary Hagel's direction. And inadequacies in the 1st Division and other divisions that have some decent capability should be filled by the United States.

Now, obviously, that takes cooperation from Baghdad, it is going to take a commitment by the President, and it is going to take a program of some extent to rearm and equip the Sunni tribes and organizations that came about in the movement called the "Awakening" when they started to turn against Al Qaeda.

We need to reestablish that dynamic. That is a way to blunt ISIS in terms of its deepening occupation of western Iraq.

So, thanks for letting me come in and give you one man's opinion. And I just want to come and see if my picture is ageing gracefully. And a lot better than I am, I can see. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Hunter can be found in the Appendix on page 43.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Dr. Biddle.

STATEMENT OF DR. STEPHEN BIDDLE, PROFESSOR OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS, GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Dr. BIDDLE. I would like to thank the chairman and the committee for the opportunity to testify. The written submission that I provided offers a sustained analysis of U.S. options for responding to ISIL's offense in Iraq. I am not going to try and summarize it here. What I want to do with my time, however, is just briefly sketch its bottom lines for the committee.

And in particular, the written statement argues that all the available options, of course, have serious drawbacks, but of them, the least bad, is probably a combination of limited conditional military assistance, designed chiefly to encourage Iraqi political reform, together with containment initiatives to make the war less likely to spread and to limit damage to the United States if it does spread.

The next best option for us would be a minimalist policy of containment only with no direct military aid to Baghdad. Unconditional military aid is the least attractive choice. These options are so unattractive because of major underlying imbalance of stakes between Americans and Iraqis that limits achievable U.S. influence over outcomes in this conflict.

Iraq is already engulfed in a renewed ethno-sectarian civil war, pitting its Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish communities against one another. For Iraqis, this conflict is existential. Each community fears oppression at best, and genocide at worst, from its rivals, and this creates unusually bitter warfare among them. Think Syria, the Balkans, or Iraq itself in 2006.

For Americans, by contrast, the stakes are real, but they are not existential. ISIL poses a terrorist threat, but terrorism with conventional weapons doesn't threaten our way of life, not even 9/11 achieved that and ISIL is a long way from a 9/11 attack.

Iraq poses major humanitarian stakes, but the U.S. rarely uses force on humanitarian grounds alone. Probably the most direct threat to U.S. security interest is the danger that the war could spread across Iraq's borders to embroil its neighbors with both humanitarian and economic consequences for Americans.

These stakes are real, but they fall short of the existential issues that Iraqis face. Economic projections suggest that even a regionwide Sunni-Shia war that took half the GCC's [Gulf Cooperation Council] oil exports off the market and doubled world oil prices as a result would probably cut U.S. GDP [gross domestic product] by somewhere in the neighborhood of 3 to 5 percentage points.

That is serious money. It could very well tip the U.S. into recession and at current levels at somewhere between $450 billion and $750 billion a year in lost output. But even that is a long way from a new Great Depression.

Our stakes are far from trivial, but they fall into that awkward region between the vital and the negligible. And this means that our real influence over the Iraq war's course is going to be limited.

Our stakes don't support massive intervention. We are not going to send another 160,000 American ground soldiers back to Iraq at this point. But without this, Iraqis are unlikely to take risks with what they are going to see as life and death decisions just to please Americans.

In particular, most regimes and sectarian wars like Iraq's try to crush their communal rivals. And this often yields long bloody internecine and civil warfare, which historically typically runs 7 to 10 years in duration.

The longer the war, the greater the danger that it spreads. For us, a settlement in the meantime that shortens the war, stops the bloodletting and caps the risk of spread is certainly a better approach. But a settlement that would accomplish this would require major political change in Baghdad to accommodate legitimate Sunni interest and create a demonstrably non-sectarian, professionalized Iraqi army and police, neither of which exists today.

These reforms are going to look dangerously risky to Iraq's Shiite regime. With its survival on the line, it is unlikely to accept such policies quickly and the limited leverage inherent and limited U.S. assistance is unlikely to move them as far or as fast as we would like.

And that leaves us with an unpleasant choice. Between helping Iraq's Shia crush Sunnis via simple unconditional aid; simply staying out altogether while containing the damage; or playing a long-game strategy using conditional U.S. aid to gradually and incrementally nudge Baghdad toward the reforms necessary to shorten the war by splitting the Sunni coalition, marginalizing ISIL radicals and settling the war before it runs its natural course.

But given our limited influence, this is not going to happen quickly and it is not going to happen easily. If we are patient, persistent, and consistent, we might be able to help shorten the war in this way, and I prefer this option for reasons that I present in my written statement. But staying out altogether is a viable alternative.

The least viable of the three is simple unconditional military assistance. This is likely to reinforce Baghdad's worst instincts, to lengthen rather than shorten the war by forcing the Sunni community to dig in its heels and defend itself against what it will view as a threat of extermination, and it risks mission creep and entrapment without compensating upsides and an ability to meaningfully shorten the war.

If we are unwilling to be systematically conditional, staying out would be better than that.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Biddle can be found in the Appendix on page 48.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Boot.

STATEMENT OF MAX BOOT, JEANE J. KIRKPATRICK SENIOR FELLOW FOR NATIONAL SECURITY STUDIES, COUNCIL ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Mr. BOOT. Thank you for inviting me to testify. I have finally mastered this high-tech microphone here, push the button. Again, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I know I speak for everybody here, that it will be a very sad day when you are no longer wielding that gavel.

I think you have done tremendous service not only to this committee, not only to this Congress, but also to the armed services and to the entire country. And it is a privilege to be here with you today.

I think the threat from ISIS is a clear and present——

Mr. HUNTER. Give him more time, Buck. You want to give him some more time.

Mr. BOOT. I will take an hour or two to give my views more fully. You know, I do think that the threat from ISIS is a clear and present danger to American national security. The fact that you now have this fundamentalist caliphate, this new state spreading across the borders of both Syria and Iraq, is something about which we ought to be very, very alarmed.

The fact that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed caliph of this new state, is saying that soon we will be in direct confrontation with the United States is even further cause for alarm. There is very good reason why Attorney General Holder said that this is more frightening than anything he has seen in his years as attorney general.

This is a new Taliban-like state that will be a magnet for international jihadists, many of whom will wind up going to other countries and directly threaten the United States and our allies.

And what makes this even worse is the impact on Shiites of this growing Sunni fundamentalism, because what we are seeing in both Iraq and Syria is that those two countries are being split between Islamist extremists of some Sunni, other Shiite. And the stronger that the Sunni fundamentalists of ISIS get, the stronger that you see the backlash which is being led by Iran and its Quds Force and its proxies like Lebanese Hezbollah and the various Shiite militias in Iraq.

It is hard to imagine a more frightening scenario from the standpoint of American interest. But, and I want to stress this point over and over again, the fact that the situation looks dire does not mean that we do not have options, it does not mean that we should just throw up our hands in despair and say let them fight it out.

That is not a good option. We have seen the fight-it-out option play out in Syria, where the result has been more than 170,000 dead people and the destabilization of neighboring regimes.

In fact, it was the civil war in Syria which led directly to the resurgence of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria and their ability to take over large portions of western and northern Iraq.

We don't want to see this scenario play out until Jordan and other neighboring states are likewise destabilized.

So what can we do to confront this horror that we face in the Middle East? Well, I think we need a strategy on both sides of the

rapidly disintegrating border between Iraq and Syria. We need to keep pressure on ISIS on both sides, on both Iraq and Syria.

Now, in the case of Syria, what that means, I think, is backing the Free Syrian Army, which is the only moderate element left in the fighting in Syria. Now, I will admit to you, this would have been a heck of a lot more effective if we have done more a couple of years ago, as a lot of people urged that we should do.

Because we have let the Free Syrian Army basically dangle out there by themselves, they have been getting more and more marginalized as the extremists of ISIS and the Nusra Front on the one hand and of Hezbollah and the Quds Force on the other hand as they have been growing stronger and stronger.

But I still think we don't really have any option other than to do what we can to buttress the Free Syrian Army, which is why I urge you to back the administration's request for $500 million in aid, even though I am very concerned about how that aid will be spent.

I am very concerned when I read in the Wall Street Journal the Pentagon representatives being quoted saying that even with all that money, all they are going to do is train about 2,300 fighters for the Free Syrian Army, and that won't even start until next year. That is thinking far too small to deal with the size of the threat that we face.

But, while there are no great options in Syria, I do think that the Free Syrian Army has an interest in fighting our enemies, chiefly Hezbollah and ISIS. The Free Syrian Army is opposed to both. They are willing to go out there and kill people who want to kill Americans.

That to me is a pretty good deal and I think we should certainly support them, not with ground troops, not by putting a lot of our troops in harm's way, but simply by providing them the arms and training they need to be more effective against the extremists of both sides.

Now, when we turn to what is happening Iraq, I would certainly agree with the general consensus that Maliki has to go, and I think most Iraqis increasingly feel the same way. I am glad that the administration seems to be committed to that policy, although I wish there was a higher level of interest in the administration in getting that job done.

I am concerned that President Obama, even to this day, has been very hands off in his handling with Iraq. I don't think he is according it the priority that it deserves. He has been delegating it to Vice President Biden or our ambassador or others, who are all capable individuals, but they don't have the power and prestige that the President of the United States has.

And I think it is imperative for President Obama to get more directly involved in trying to work out a more acceptable political outcome in Iraq that would involve somebody who is more acceptable to Sunnis than Maliki becoming prime minister.

But now I don't think there is a debate about to what extent we shut off our military aid while this Maliki regime remains in power. I don't think we can afford to take a hands-off attitude and say, well, we are not going to help do anything at all in Iraq to check the growth of ISIS as long as Maliki is in power. That will

make us feel good, but it is not going to achieve our objectives. At least, I don't think it will.

I certainly agree with my colleague, Steve Biddle, that we should not offer unconditional aid to the Iraqi armed forces as they currently stand. But I think what we need to do is we need to support all of the moderate factions in Iraq.

Parts of the Iraqi security forces which still continue to function well, like the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, we need to buttress them with advisers, with intelligence specialists, and also with combat air controllers who can call in airstrikes as necessary to support their attempt to push back ISIS.

But at the same time, we also need to remember that the Iraqi security forces are not the only factor at play. There are also the Sunni tribes, which have been mentioned very eloquently by Chairman Hunter, and there is also the Kurdish Peshmerga. Those are all three potentially moderate elements that we can support to push back the extremists, not only of ISIS, but also of the Shiite extremists who are being backed by the Iranian Quds Force.

So I think we need to be very careful to apportion our aid to all of these groups, to all of the moderates, to establish direct ties with the Sunni tribes, to establish direct ties with the Kurdish Peshmerga, as well as with certain select elements of the Iraqi security forces that we judge to be less infiltrated by the Iranian influence and the Shiite militias and other parts of the Iraqi security forces.

And with all those more moderate security elements, what we ought to be doing is we ought to be providing them with advisers, who were so effective in buttressing the professionalism of the Iraqi security forces prior to 2012.

We ought to be providing them with more intelligence specialists, we ought to be providing them, again, as I mentioned before, with combat air controllers so they can call on American air power.

If we can do that and if we also put some of our special operations forces back in, use the very effective man-hunting capability of the Joint Special Operations Command to go after terrorist networks in the way that they did in Iraq prior to 2012, those squadrons can be based in the Kurdish area, they can be based in Baghdad, they can even be based in Jordan or in parts of the Sunni Triangle.

If we combine all those, I think we can start to get a comprehensive strategy which can push back ISIS along with the political line of action.

Now, I don't—this is certainly not calling for, you know, sending 150,000 troops and waging a major ground war, that is clearly off the table, but I do think we do need to look at numbers along the lines of perhaps 10,000 personnel who would not be going to combat, who would be serving in an advise-and-assist capacity aside from a very small number of Joint Special Operations personnel, and along, of course, with all the enablers, the logistics, and security elements they need to be able to operate safely.

I mean, that is the sort of force that our commanders were calling to keep in Iraq after 2011, and I think we have seen in the year since the cost of not keeping those forces there.

I know this is going to be a tough sell. I know nobody is eager to send any troops to Iraq beyond the 820 that we already sent

there. But I think we have to be realistic and understand it. This is—we don't have any great options here. We have the least bad options.

And to my mind, the worst option of all is simply leaving this terrorist caliphate in control of a significant chunk of the Middle East. I think the only way you can roll back is with a slightly greater commitment of American resources to change the equation on the ground in both Syria and Iraq without putting American combat troops in harm's way.

Final point I would make is, if we do all this, I think we do have a good chance to roll back ISIS, because they are vulnerable. They are not that popular with the population that they dominate.

We have seen in the past how easily the tide could turn against them as it did in 2006, 2007. But I think American commitment, American leadership is necessary.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Boot can be found in the Appendix on page 63.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Fishman.

STATEMENT OF BRIAN FISHMAN, COUNTERTERRORISM RESEARCH FELLOW, NEW AMERICA FOUNDATION

Mr. FISHMAN. Thank you, Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee, for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

The challenges to American interest in the Middle East could hardly be more interrelated, but I am going to focus sharply on the danger posed by the so-called Islamic State, which as you said, Chairman, controls significant portions of both Syria and Iraq.

I will get to policy suggestions, but I think there is a lot of misunderstanding, basic misunderstanding about the Islamic State. So I am going to give a little bit of history and then comment on its strategic outlook today.

The Islamic State is the current incarnation of Al Qaeda in Iraq, which was created when Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden in October 2004. The Islamic State of Iraq [ISI] was declared in October 2006, 4 months after a U.S. airstrike killed Zarqawi. This was not just a naming convention.

According to its organizers, AQI, Al Qaeda in Iraq, ceased to exist at that point, as the ISI was intended to be a governing institution independent from Al Qaeda and a practical step toward ultimately declaring a caliphate. The state has existed for 8 years. That intent of the ISI was easily overlooked because the group was weak. In 2007, the Sunni Awakening and the Surge undermined it almost immediately.

The Surge and Awakening did not, however, defeat the ISI. The group retreated to northern Iraq, near Mosul, where it survived by capitalizing on tension between Arabs and Kurds, utilizing the logistics networks that it had long cultivated to move foreign fighters through Syria, and continued dissatisfaction amongst Sunnis with sectarianism in the Maliki government.

Despite the setbacks, the ISI remained a capable organization even after the Surge and Awakening. Between 2008 and 2010, the National Counterterrorism Center tracked more terrorist violence

in Iraq than any other country in the world, including Afghanistan and Pakistan.

When the uprising against Bashar al-Assad began in the summer of 2011, the ISI did not have to build networks in Syria. They were already there, and had been supporting its smuggling and foreign fighter operations for years.

In January 2012, the ISI established an organization in Syria called Jabhat al-Nusra, which many of you know. But Nusra leader Abu Mohammad al-Jawlani looked to Al Qaeda central for strategic guidance rather than the ISI Emir Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who asserted his own authority.

As a result of this disagreement, the ISI changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant [ISIL] in April 2013, which reflected de facto severing of ties with Nusra and a reaffirmation of its split with Al Qaeda.

In June 2014, after finally capturing its former safe haven, Mosul, the group was clearly the strongest jihadi entity in the world and declared a caliphate, with supposed authority from North Africa to South Asia.

Despite the shared lineage in ideology, the Islamic State and Al Qaeda are separate organizations. They have three basic disagreements. First, whereas Al Qaeda prioritizes attacks against the U.S. homeland and Western Europe, the Islamic State does not. It prioritizes establishing political authority in the Middle East.

Second, the Islamic State uses a much loosened understanding of "takfir" than Al Qaeda, which means that it is more willing to kill Muslims, a fact that is reflected in its battles with other militants.

Lastly, the Islamic State believes Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is caliph and the supreme authority for all Muslims. Al Qaeda has not formally responded to this claim yet, but the designation has been rejected by many senior jihadi ideologues, and I think we can expect that Al Qaeda will be concerned about it as well.

Despite prioritizing power projection in the Middle East, the Islamic State does pose a direct threat to Western Europe and the U.S. homeland. The group is so large and multifaceted that it would be surprising if some subgroups influenced by Al Qaeda propaganda did not intend such strikes.

More than 11,000 foreign fighters have traveled to Syria including up to 3,000 from Western Europe and North America. The best academic studies suggest that one out of nine Muslim foreign fighters pursue terrorism once they leave an arena like this, which is a relatively low percentage, but still suggests that a very high number may be influenced or may be interested in militancy once they go home.

Moreover, the Islamic State is not just a terrorist organization. It is a proto-state, think the Taliban pre-9/11, and it can offer safe-haven to militants with more global agendas.

The Islamic State's greatest weaknesses are its tenuous alliances with other Sunni factions, as discussed by everyone else on the panel. In both Iraq and Syria, these are based on compulsion and opposition to existing regimes, rather than a shared vision of government. These alliances can be broken. But in Iraq, in particular, they will not be broken while the Maliki government exists as it does and governs in a sectarian way.

None of the U.S. policy options towards the Islamic State are particularly attractive, but considering its strength and weaknesses, U.S. strategy should aim to contain the Islamic State while strengthening governance in the region such that local actors can collaborate effectively to engage it decisively. Those conditions don't exist today.

That means to do that, to get there, we should bolster allies on the Islamic State's periphery such as Turkey and in particular Jordan, which is the most likely new target of the Islamic State. Destabilization there would have tremendously damaging effects vis-a-vis both Israel and Saudi Arabia.

We should support vetted Syrian rebels with appropriate military assistance, limited military assistance, so long as that assistance will be sustained. Better not to provide military assistance at all than drop weaponry into a shifting battlefield and then withdraw. It is not a matter of just supporting $500 million. This has to be a long-term strategy or we will make things worse.

We need to provide conditional military assistance to Iraq. Blunting the Islamic State's military success is likely to encourage dissension among its coalition partners. We should pursue a long-term strategy to improve governance in Iraq and Syria. This is both the most important and the most difficult of these suggestions.

The goal should be to reduce ungoverned territory however possible, including by supporting regional actors like the KRG, the Kurdish Regional Government, and even Sunni factions that seek increased autonomy from Baghdad and Damascus. I don't think that we should depend on the borders as we understand them and the governments that reported—supposedly have control over that territory. The facts on the ground simply suggest they do not.

Contrary to much public discourse since the fall of Mosul, the Islamic State's rise was not sudden. Even at its nadir it was one of the most active terrorist organizations in the world. We did not pay enough attention.

Lastly, the Islamic State is not a flash in the pan. It is going to remain a significant threat to U.S. interest in the Middle East for the foreseeable future. We can contain it as I have described, but it can only be truly destroyed in conjunction with credible local governments that do not currently exist.

Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Fishman can be found in the Appendix on page 75.]

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. In order to give more Members an opportunity to question, I am going to forego my questions at this time. We will have Mr. Scott. Dr. Wenstrup? No questions. Ms. Walorski.

Ms. WALORSKI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you to the panel. To your—and I appreciate your information. I think it is one of the best hearings that we have had on this issue that is of concern to all of us.

On the issue though of Baghdadi, the leader, and it seems that there is not a whole lot of information flowing out and around here about necessarily who he is. But is he—how important is he to ISIS

in general? I guess I am going to direct this to Mr. Boot. Anybody else that wants to chime in here.

Is he a—is he truly the head? If ISIS fractured, is he really the one that calls the shots? And what is the possibility of if he is removed the stability of ISIS as they go forward?

Mr. BOOT. I think that is a very good question and I don't—I can't report to give you an inside scoop on the functionings of ISIS. I mean, from what I have seen, I think he is important, but we should not exaggerate the importance of any one individual either.

I mean, we saw that with the ISIS predecessor organization, Al Qaeda in Iraq, where in 2006, JSOC [Joint Special Operations Command] managed to kill Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and we thought that was a great victory against AQI. And now here we are, all these years later, and it is actually more powerful than ever before.

I mean, I think the history of insurgencies generally suggest that there are very few groups that are weak enough to be eliminated by the elimination of their leaders. Generally, they are—these large flung insurgencies like ISIS are strong enough to survive the elimination not only of their leader, but of an entire tier of mid- to high-level leaders.

We certainly should be aiming to eliminate those leaders, but it has to be done as part of a more comprehensive strategy with different lines of operation, which ultimately culminate in somebody being able to control the ground on which these terrorists seek to operate. It doesn't have to be our troops, but it has to be the troops of some allied nation.

Otherwise, they will be able to simply regenerate themselves and replace any leader lost in leadership targeting. I think that is a pretty consistent historic lesson.

Ms. WALORSKI. Thank you. Chairman Hunter, did you have a comment?

Mr. HUNTER. Yes. I just—I think that Max pointed out well. We introduced Zarqawi to a couple of thousand-pound bombs in his safe haven up by Baqubah in 2006. It did not—but at that time, at that point, we were crushing Al Qaeda in Anbar province, but Al Qaeda was able to continue until they were defeated on the battleground.

And what ISIS has is it—it has a lot of ongoing military operations. Ongoing military operations breed leaders. So you have got a lot of battalion leader—if you are going to analogize it to a conventional force, battalion leaders, division commanders, et cetera. You got people who will step up, because they are obviously in many ways it is a disjointed operation. So you have got people who take the leadership initiative within that group and one of them will flow to the fore, in my estimation.

Ms. WALORSKI. The other question I have to anybody sitting here—and I appreciate your responses—is, I was in a briefing a couple of weeks ago with a former ambassador that I thought was just incredible information and kind of corroborating what you were all saying, which is this imminent threat to the United States.

And are we getting ourselves to a point or are we at the point of no return when it comes to potentially limited airstrikes, slowing down the momentum of ISIS, doing anything to throw some kind

of an obstacle in their way or have we gotten to a point here with the inability and inaction of our administration where we won't ratchet this back in?

Mr. HUNTER. No. I think very simply if you—once again, the 1st Iraqi Division was extremely effective in the end in Iraq, went down and took Basra despite the prognostications of the Washington Post, they wiped out Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi army in Basra, pivoted, went 400 miles north, cleared Baqubah and worked that area.

And what made it so effective, one of the factors that made it extremely effective was we had an ANGLICO [Air Naval Gunfire Liaison Company] fire team embedded, headed by a Colonel Tim Bleidistel embedded who could bring in bomber strikes, tactical aircraft, and drones. And that gives enormous leverage to an infantry operation.

If we need to find out if the 1st Iraqi Division, one of the questions I would have is, is it intact, does it still have the same leadership like General Tariq, who fought at the head of his troops, did not give ground and fought professionally. Or has the Maliki government replaced it with some political hacks.

One thing we could do if we had a—I think we need to engage the people who have the relationships. Petraeus knows Maliki and knows his general and if they leaned on him to put competent people, not politicians, in the key positions in the 1st Division, for example, maybe the 7th Division, the 5th Division, and you then place an American fire team with the ability to bring in airstrikes, you give enormous leverage to that infantry operation with a minimum of American exposure and without a lot of what we call boots on the ground or large combat forces.

So first, let's find out if any of these heretofore solid military units are intact, fill up the inadequacies that they have, and if we attached American fire control teams to them as we did in the past, they would be able to utilize American firepower coming from the air. And that would make them extremely effective. And they could isolate the cities that Al Qaeda has taken—that ISIS has taken and be brutal fighting as was the battle of Fallujah, but they could in fact prevail.

So we need to—we may need to move in the people who have had these long relationships like Petraeus and like Odierno. And incidentally, you know that, if I could expand beyond that to the Maliki question. One thing Americans don't do is look for who is the man behind the door when we all talk about so-and-so must go.

I never forget the lesson we got with the Shah of Iran when the—when we got rid of the Shah in Iran, and lo and behold there was a Khomeini to take his place. The question would be who is going to step into the place of al-Maliki who isn't massively controlled by Iran. You move that dynamic.

And historically, Maliki moved to the pressure exerted by Petraeus, by the Bush government through Petraeus. He did things, he took initiatives like going down to Basra and wiping out the Mahdi army down there.

And so, the idea that that is a problem, we got to get rid of Maliki and somehow we are going to have another leader come in

in the middle of this maelstrom of military activity and he is going to sew the country together or he is going to do the right thing.

I think that Maliki would move to American pressure. I think he has learned to some degree the lesson of divesting himself of the Sunni element, which he did. And now, the inability to have a Sunni buffer, if you will, in Anbar to hold off these extremist elements, that is probably fairly clear to Maliki.

Ms. WALORSKI. I appreciate it. I hear the chairman banging the gavel.

Mr. HUNTER. Thanks for letting me monologue. That was a good opportunity.

Ms. WALORSKI. That was the chairman. I want to say it is an honor to meet you, sir, and how I never thought I would be in a room with two Duncan Hunters. So, appreciate you being here today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. HUNTER. That is a dubious honor.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mr. Cooper.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Here we are discussing the aftermath of America's longest war. There is very little Member or audience interest. Perhaps more people are watching on C–SPAN [Cable-Satellite Public Affairs Network], but I doubt it.

I always thought the first rule of war was to understand the nature of the enemy. And I am afraid after all these years, we are still doing a very poor job of understanding it.

I have questions about who is funding ISIS or ISIL or the Islamic State, whatever name you choose to call it. They seem to be more corporate with their annual reports, with their metrics of achievements, including horrible assassinations and other maximally destructive activities.

But isn't it largely true that some of our so-called allies, whether the state or individuals like the Saudis, the Qataris, the Kuwaitis, are supplying the revenues for these people?

To whom are the annual reports being distributed? Why do they have such a corporate fundraising empire going on?

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, public reporting to date suggests that ISIL is unusually self-funded relative to other organizations of its kind, that they have been better than their predecessors and others at extracting revenue from the economy in which they are operating.

And in part, this is because of the degree of institutionalization that you are referring to. We often tend to think of non-state actors as more or less random bands of isolated guerillas. They can be quite bureaucratic, quite institutionalized, quite formal in their organization.

And in fact, that kind of institutionalization tends to conduce to actual military power in many ways in a much more profound ways in the nature of the arms and equipment that they have.

Now, ISIL is an element within what is in some danger of becoming a region-wide Sunni-Shia proxy war. They are not the preferred proxy of Saudi Arabia or other Sunni states in the region, because their ability to control them is lower and the degree to which they are worried about ISIL turning on them is larger.

But the fact that there is a larger Sunni-Shia conflict going on is something we need to be seriously concerned about. And our

strategy for dealing with this situation, it seems to me, needs to be oriented towards preventing the larger sectarian war from occurring.

All that having been said, again, I think cutting funding ties from outside ISIL into ISIL is probably not the central factor in whether this organization will survive or not given their unusual degree of internal funding.

Mr. COOPER. Or what you gently described is internal funding could include rape and pillage like when they go into a town and knock over a bank and take all the deposits for themselves.

Dr. BIDDLE. Absolutely.

Mr. COOPER. You know, so they are more effective in their business model. And this presumably appeals to some of their Sunni patrons, because they have been looking for decades at someone to stand up to the perceived Shia peril and they blame America for having sided with Maliki and the Iraq war in fact having strengthened Iran, not weakened Iran.

So, you are right, I think they worry about controllability of al-Baghdadi and folks like that, but this is in many ways a better business model, something they have been looking for for some time. And of course, they want deniability. They don't want obvious contacts because that would stain their reputation.

But I run into very few people who want Americans inserted between the 1,400-year struggle between Shia and Sunni. And it escapes me what vital American interests are involved in that insertion.

It is not as if we were super effective in our prior years and years of American service and sacrifice. You know, we honor our troops, but there is an article in the paper today predicting that collapse in Afghanistan would happen even faster than it has happened in Iraq.

Dr. BIDDLE. Well, I think that——

Mr. BOOT. Mr. Cooper, if I could just jump in and just to underline a point that Steve made, which I think is a very important one, which is you are seeing this regional civil war brewing.

And I think when you put it the way you put it, nobody is going to say let's put Americans in the middle of this civil war. But I think that there are very important stakes for our country and for our allies in the region, because what happens in a civil war if it rages unabated, it strengthens the extremists on both sides. And that is what you are seeing right now.

I mean, if you are worried about Saudi Arabia or Qatar, other states backing ISIS, that danger is going to grow the more that ISIS becomes the only viable and effective champion of Sunni power. If you are worried about backing for Lebanese Hezbollah and Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq and other Shiite militias in Iraq and Syria, that funding, that support will grow among the Shiite community as long as they are seen as the only effective champion of the Shiites against Sunni oppression.

I think our stake is to support the moderates to prevent the entire region, this major center of world oil production, from being divided between Shiite and Sunni radicals. If that happens I think that is a disaster for American interests, but I don't think that is what most people in the region want. And I think there are mod-

erate forces, whether in the Iraqi security forces and the Sunni tribes, the Kurdish Peshmerga, or the Free Syrian Army, who are ready to put their lives on the line to oppose the extremists of both sides, if we would only provide them with a relatively modest degree of support.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you. Mrs. Hartzler.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to follow up on a lot of discussion that has already taken place, first starting with Maliki.

Some of you and a lot of people say Maliki needs to go. And then I have heard also that we need to push back and influence Maliki to do the right thing.

And then I hear some concerns from you, Mr. Chairman, that I wonder about also, as far as if he goes, who is going to replace him?

And look at what happened in Libya and Gaddafi and the other conflicts that we have had and that sort of thing.

So I guess, first I want to start off with whether you think Maliki should go and if he does who should replace him, or how should the U.S. prepare for that transition in power. And then if it is a matter of influence, what are some specific steps that we can do to encourage him to expand his government to include Sunnis in it.

And then also if we have time, to share a little bit about what the role of Iran is in the conflict now, and then what lessons we could learn with Afghanistan. So a lot to work with there.

So who wants to start?

Mr. HUNTER. Let me jump in and give it a try. First, what I would do and what I would recommend that the President do is to take the people that had the longest standing relationship with Maliki, the most successful relationship—that is Mr. Crocker and General Petraeus—and send them over to look this thing over and engage with Maliki and bring them back in and ask them what do you think?

Do you think that Maliki, the relationship with Maliki is retrievable in a way that we can move him to reconcile with the Sunni community to the degree that you will have some pushback in Anbar Province among the moderate tribes against ISIS.

Or is that gone? Has he irretrievably, by the things that he has done, with respect to the Sunnis and his own government and the region; is that—has that train departed?

But that is the simple answer is to take the people that have the relationship, send them over, have them engage with Maliki, have them look at this thing. People that you relied on, and you talked to every day, or the administration and our security apparatus talked to every day, and ask them.

My sense is Maliki is a typical leader in that neighborhood. He is a guy that wants to get through the night. He had moved to American pressure; when we pressured him to send money to Anbar Province to share the wealth, he did it, late in the war. When we pressured him to allow competent generals and to have a fairly large Sunni presence in the Iraqi Army, the 1st Iraqi Division had 30 percent Sunnis, 60 percent Shiites, the balance, Kurds. He did that.

So he moved to American pressure and American leadership. And I think the President should ask that assessment to be made by the people that worked with him for the longest period of time and had the most success with him.

That is—rather than simply saying—and the other point is, this is not a Sunni—ISIS does not represent a Sunni community. The Sunni community is not a united community in Anbar Province, any more than the tribes who initially accommodated Al Qaeda, as they flowed down the rat line of the Euphrates, and moved into Fallujah and Ramadi into those conflicts.

The Sunni community got beat up by Al Qaeda. That is one reason they split off from them, turned and came over on our side and helped us crush Al Qaeda. I mean, the 20th Revolutionary Brigade, which was the ally at one time of Al Qaeda in the region known as the Zaidon, turned on them and killed every one of them that didn't get out of Dodge; with the Americans behind them, not leading them, but behind them.

So the point is that this is not a—I don't think there is anything that the leader in Baghdad, a Shiite leader can do that will mollify the terrorists who are coming across known as ISIS. I think what he could do is accommodate, retrieve that relationship that they had developed at one point with the Sunni tribes, which was a decent relationship.

After the 1st Iraqi Division took on Muqtada Al-Sadr in Basra and wiped out his forces there, Muqtada Al-Sadr got 5 percent in the next election. His party did. The Iraqi people did not like a Shiite who was aligned with Iran.

And the Sunnis came back into the government. They said the Maliki government is not just beating up on Sunnis, they are taking on Shiite forces too.

So there is nothing we can do to reconcile with ISIS. And ISIS's positions, and their strategy and their goals are not at all consistent with the Sunni tribes in Anbar. The Sunni tribes are accommodating them right now because they are intimidated by them. And I suspect that if we see the intelligence reports and there are any intelligence reports—as Jim Cooper said, one problem we have had is decent intelligence. We will probably see the leaders in those tribes who pushed back have been assassinated.

Mrs. HARTZLER. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you.

Ms. Shea-Porter.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Thank you.

It is nice to see you again, Mr. Hunter. And I keep reflecting back to 2007, and where we were and what some of the predictions were, and sadly, you know, those who predicted trouble in the future in Iraq have proven to be accurate.

But one of the great problems that we have, as you know, is the sequester. So for those who support a more active role—and particularly you, Mr. Hunter, because you were in Congress. You understand the sequester. I know you know what is happening, some of the changes.

And while we were in the Iraq war we also had tax cuts. And we wound up with a great deal of debt which is now very threat-

ening and concerning to—not just Congress but to the American people.

So what is the price tag? Never mind whether we should or we shouldn't do the things that you suggested and Mr. Boot is looking at. What is the price tag and what would you say to Congress about how to pay for it? Would you suggest that we continue to borrow the money? Would you say that maybe we need to have war bonds?

If we were to do the action steps that you are calling for, how would we pay for it?

Mr. HUNTER. Well, first, big picture, John Kennedy spent 9 percent of GNP [gross national product] on defense. Ronald Reagan spent 6 percent of GNP on defense. We are down to about 4 [percent], even with Iraq and Afghanistan.

So in terms of the proportion of American money that we spend on defense, we have declined. And we have now made massive cuts with per sequestration and budget cuts in the defense apparatus, far below what I think is what I would call is the safety line.

So I think we are spending less in terms of the national economy than we have ever spent in our history. And we are going to have a much smaller force.

And secondly, the Iraq things that I have—or Iraq initiatives, for example, having fire support teams as we did in the 2007, 2008, in Iraq with some of the Iraqi divisions. That to leverage, give leverage to them of American air power, very small cost for the embedded teams. I mean, that is nothing like the divisions that we had over there as foot soldiers——

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Right, but let me interrupt here if you don't mind.

Mr. HUNTER. Okay.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Because I am against the sequester. I mean, I agree that this has been damaging. But the reality is that, you know, our Congress is not willing to find a way and actually has supported the sequester.

So the reality remains that whether I agree or disagree with what you have suggested we have that practical issue of how do we pay for it? Do we borrow the money, or do you see a change in Congress? And how would we actually do this?

Mr. HUNTER. Okay. My recommendation would be and I think my voting record reflected that, would be to cut the—I think we are moving in the dynamic of most of the Western nations, especially the socialized nations, and that social spending is pressing down on defense spending and that is why you got some of our allies that are in Europe now spending 1 percent of GNP or less on defense.

I think we should freeze, for example, domestic discretionary. We should make cuts in the social spending and push that spending back to the point where it will accommodate a 5 or 6 percent of GNP being spent on national security.

I think it is a tragedy that with the rise of China stepping into the superpower shoes left by the Soviet Union, with the problems in the Ukraine, the new Russian adventurism, all the problems in the world, we are cutting defense, we are not increasing defense.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Okay, but—and again, the issue is and I am just trying to get us to——

Mr. HUNTER. So I would cut social spending.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER [continuing]. Think about that, because I think, you know, we need those social programs, but I think we need a strong defense as well.

And so, what we are talking about—I think we are asking people to choose from two essentials, to rob Peter to pay Paul essentially. And that is concerning. I think whatever policy——

Mr. HUNTER. Except for one thing——

Ms. SHEA-PORTER [continuing]. Has reflected reality——

Mr. HUNTER. Except for one thing, Paul is down to 4 percent, if Paul is defense. Paul is down to 4 percent of GNP being spent on defense.

The social spending has increased steadily as defense has diminished, so——

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. I see where you are, I just wondered if you——

Mr. HUNTER. It is not hard to see——

Ms. SHEA-PORTER [continuing]. Had a view about how to do this.

Mr. BOOT. Congresswoman, if I could just.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Dr. Biddle, can—excuse me—Dr. Biddle, can you suggest a way or do you see a way through this knowing the economic pressures that we have, does your plan fit—your acceptable plan or least disagreeable plan, does that fit in with the reality of this Congress?

Dr. BIDDLE. I don't think the primary downside of conditional military assistance is its cost, even the program that Max is suggesting, which would probably be larger than I would recommend.

The usual rule of thumb is to support an American soldier overseas for a year is about a million dollars. So even a 10,000 or 15,000 soldier American presence in Iraq if, one, we are going to do that, and I am not sure that I would support that personally. And certainly I would not support it without a major political change as the price of providing whatever we have.

The downside peril to that is not so much its upfront dollar cost, it is the risk that the policy fails and we get entrapped and we get caught in a larger commitment in which mission creep gradually draws us further into a problem that we have been unable to solve.

So I think paying for it is in many ways the least of the downside difficulties associated with this. Getting the policy to actually change Iraqi behavior on the ground is a much bigger risk.

Ms. SHEA-PORTER. Because what we did see was that mission creep. And we saw promises that didn't materialize.

I remember somebody here one time saying that we would be seeing Iraqi products on the shelf within a certain number of months. And that didn't happen.

So, we have to consider all of this as we try to formulate a policy going forward. Our security, our national security is critical along with our social programs. So thank you for your candid answers.

And I yield back.

Mr. FRANKS [presiding]. It is an honor here for me to say just a quick word of greeting to Chairman Hunter, I didn't get to be here at the beginning. There was no way I could have helped that but it is just a precious honor to see you again.

All of us recognize your legacy and it is in that spirit that I now recognize Mr. Hunter to——

Mr. HUNTER OF CALIFORNIA. Thank the Chairman. This could be fun, especially if I was to take advantage of this situation to——

Mr. HUNTER. I have been dreading this——

Mr. HUNTER OF CALIFORNIA [continuing]. To bludgeon the witness due to real or imagined trauma from the past. But I guess this is kind of easy because I think I have heard everything that Mr. Hunter has to say on this subject.

So I am going to ask a broader question, maybe some of the other panelists could answer. I guess the first question is, no one has talked about a political end-state, or what we would have to describe in our policy is that here is what we want to see in the next 10 years, and here is why we are doing all of this.

When does that come into play and wouldn't the President have to be the one to set that, and tied in with that is, what can Congress do with a Commander in Chief that doesn't want to engage?

And if the other witnesses could maybe start and move left this time.

Mr. Fishman.

Mr. FISHMAN. Sure.

Mr. HUNTER. You know, this is about the meanest thing you can do.

Mr. FISHMAN. I get the hard one. The political end-state here, the only reasonable political end-state scenario in which, as long as there is civil war in Syria and Iraq, the Islamic State will persist, period. It will not go away under those conditions.

And yet there is obviously no clear end-state to the civil war in Syria. I think the chances that Bashar al-Assad will fall are dropping daily.

And so, and I think and I am deeply skeptical, frankly, that even if Prime Minister Maliki steps aside, that a government is going to step into Baghdad and govern on behalf of all Iraqis. Call that cynicism, I don't know. But it is very unlikely, I think, that some of the Sunni tribes who—I agree with Chairman Hunter's assessment, that were good allies, that potentially can be allies in the future.

But I am skeptical that they are going to accept a policy framework that would be acceptable to any Shia government in Baghdad without guarantees, you know, extraordinary guarantees of safety and support from the United States, such as existed in 2006 and 2007 when we had 150,000 troops on the ground. Without those conditions I don't know if they are going to take the risks to turn on the Islamic State as they did turn on Al Qaeda in Iraq and the Islamic State of Iraq.

And so, unfortunately, we come to suboptimal suggestions, which is, that I think we need to start looking, frankly, beyond the existing state entities of Syria and Iraq. And I think this is a de facto reality. The border between these two states is essentially meaningless, it is a map maker's whim at this point.

And I think the policy outcome or the, you know, we need to start looking to bolster stability wherever it exists. And that means, the most obvious of those in that region is the Kurdish regions. As they pursue autonomy, I think that is something that we

shouldn't necessarily—we shouldn't publicly endorse the declaration of a state, but I do think we should support their ability to govern autonomously as much as possible and I think we should find ways for them to generate oil revenue on their own, independent of Baghdad, as controversial as that is, and as problematic as that will be.

And I think we should identify the narrow vetted Syrian organizations that can govern whether they are remnants of the Free Syrian Army that can build out and carve out entities of governance. We have to limit the area of instability as much as possible and I don't think we can run that through Damascus and Baghdad.

Mr. HUNTER OF CALIFORNIA. Okay.

Mr. Boot.

Mr. BOOT. I pretty much agree with all of that. I think it is, I mean, it does, the situation does look pretty bleak today, but I am reminded of the words of General Petraeus in 2007 when he took over in Iraq and he said, it is hard but hard is not hopeless.

And I agree with that. I think that there are pockets of moderation that we can build on in both Iraq and Syria. And, you know, as Brian suggested, I would be agnostic over how many states will emerge out of the rubble of Iraq and Syria. I don't think we should necessarily be committed to supporting the existing state structures but we shouldn't dictate and say here is how you divide it up either because we don't have the knowledge or the ability to do that.

And it is not an easy solution anyway because, you know, you can easily imagine a scenario in which—and in fact which is already happening today with Iraq being split up into three states, but two of them are controlled by Islamist extremists, one Shia, the other Sunni, that is not good news from our perspective.

Our policy should be to back, however many states ultimately emerge, even if it is two, maybe it is more, whatever the number is, our strategy should be to back the moderates in all those states. And I firmly believe that the vast majority of people are in fact moderates but under conditions of anarchy and chaos they tend to gravitate for protection to extremist militias.

And so, we need to bolster more moderate forces, as I suggested before, elements of the Iraqi security forces, the Sunni tribes, the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Free Syrian Army, that is where we need to be building.

And at the moment you can easily say, well, there is not a heck of a lot to build on, but I think there is a lot of popular unease and resentment with the rule, whether of Lebanese Hezbollah or the rule of ISIS or other extremist groups. They are not gaining power via the ballot box. They are not winning popularity contests. They are shooting their way into power and they are causing a lot of resentment along the way.

They are running roughshod over existing power structures, over existing social structures. And I think there is the popular discontent there, as there was in 2006, which can be mobilized. The difference being now we are not going to do it with 150,000 troops. So we have got to pursue a more unconventional warfare model as we did, for example, in Afghanistan in the fall of 2001 when we backed the Northern Alliance with American air power and Amer-

ican special forces to bring down a very unpopular Taliban. I think that is a model that we should be applying in Iraq and Syria today.

Mr. HUNTER OF CALIFORNIA. I think I am out of time. I yield back.

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, don't I get to answer the gentleman's question?

Mr. FRANKS. Yes.

Mr. HUNTER. I would—I thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would say that what we could achieve is something of what we had at the end of the American victory in Iraq in 2008. And that was what I would call grudging admiration.

You may recall Maliki actually traveled to Anbar Province and sat down with Sunni leaders at the prodding of American—of General Petraeus, I am sure, and other Americans. And dispersed some of the wealth, some of the public wealth, did a series of public works project in Anbar Province.

So the Sunni-Shia cleavage is not going to be healed by the United States or anybody else. But we had—we could achieve—retrieve what I would call that grudging accommodation. It would be fueled with money, that means they would have to be sharing revenues, which is something that the old sheikhs of the tribes in western Iraq very much understand and appreciate.

So, sharing of money, a grudging accommodation, the present structure of government would work with their representative government if they didn't—if they weren't killing each other with AKs [AK–47 assault rifles]. So you got to have a dose of conciliation. The only people that have been able to persuade leadership in Iraq to be conciliatory—in any situation that I know of is the Americans. And that is what we did in 2007 and 2008. I think we could do that again.

Mr. FRANKS. I thank the gentleman.

And now, Ms. Gabbard.

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, gentlemen, for being here.

Mr. Boot and Mr. Fishman, it has been refreshing to hear, and particularly from both of you your direction in addressing this issue, directly taking on the fact that we have to address both Syria and Iraq in the same conversation. And that the objective needs to be on how we deal with the threat of ISIS and the impact that they are having there.

First and foremost, and understanding that the governance question really needs to be self-determined by the people who are living there.

So in this strategy to address ISIS, both of you have spoken of supporting vetted Syrian rebels. Last week we heard from some leaders in the Pentagon who also were making the pitch for the $500 million appropriation. But when asked the question about what is the objective of this support and what do we hope to accomplish, is it to overthrow Assad or is it to deal with the threat of ISIS, the basic answer I got back was both, and that is contradictory at this point because by helping overthrow Assad you are helping to create the vacuum that ISIS is seeking to take advantage of. If we are helping the Syrian rebels fight against ISIS that goes to the subjective of the problem that we are seeing in the region.

So, my question for both is, in your advocating for this support from the U.S., how do you determine that these weapons won't go into the hands of Al Nusra, Al Qaeda, others, and to what objective?

Mr. FISHMAN. So, thank you very much for the question.

I agree very much that there is a tension between our policy interests in Syria. And that has often gone unacknowledged in our policy conversations about this. We would like to think we can have it all in Syria. We cannot.

Five hundred million dollars is not going to solve either of these problems in Syria. And I think we should be very clear about this. And I think that this sort of funding—what worries me about $500 million is that it is not enough to, you know, have any major strategic impact. But it is enough that it sort of is tempting to sort of go beyond very, very narrow vetted organizations.

My preferred strategy actually would be to support a very narrow set of organizations in Syria that can pester ISIS, and give us a foothold on the ground. I don't think we are going to solve that problem within that sort of budget range. I think that solving that problem is a multi-year solution that would cost tens—if not, tens—if not, hundreds of billions of dollars. I just don't think this goes away.

But I also—I slightly disagree with your framing on the Assad regime versus ISIS. I think that what benefits ISIS the most is the continuation of conflict, not necessarily the fall of the Assad regime. It is the continuation of conflict and the fear within the Sunni communities that they try to resolve, that gives them access and allows them to win over those folks that Chairman Hunter was referring to.

The last just quick point, is that, is that there is risk with us becoming directly engaged here at all. The Islamic State is not focused on external attacks right now. It prioritizes, it very clearly prioritizes establishing governance in the Middle East. To the extent that we get more and more involved and especially if we use direct military force we raise the risk that the Islamic State will allocate more resources towards attacking the West.

And while I think there are circumstances in which we should suffer that cost, I think we should be very clear-eyed that that is a reality.

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you. Mr. Boot.

Mr. BOOT. I will just say, while that is a real risk. I think the greatest risk of all is doing nothing and letting the Islamic State consolidate its authority over large portions of Iraq and Syria, which is what is happening now.

And I think you raise a very good question about how to safeguard that aid and I think there is certainly a cautionary lesson from Afghanistan in the 1980s, but we have to recognize why there was so much blowback in Afghanistan. And part of the reason for that is that we were operating through proxies, in particularly through the Pakistani ISI [Inter-Services Intelligence] and Saudi intelligence who were funneling our aid to some of the most Islamist and radical Mujahideen fighters like Hekmatyar and Haqqani, as opposed to the more moderate like Ahmad Shah Massoud.

In the case of Syria I would strongly caution that we not repeat that mistake. We should not operate through Saudi, Qatari, or other intelligence services who may have a different agenda than we have. I think our intelligence folks need to get much more directly involved in vetting the people we are supporting and providing aid to them directly, so we know exactly who we are backing.

And in terms of what that can achieve, you know, at the moment overthrowing Assad seems like a long way off but certainly in the short term, at least, I think that with more support the Free Syrian Army can do real damage to both the forces of the Quds force and Lebanese Hezbollah on one side and the other side ISIS and the Nusra Front. And, you know, whatever damage we can do to them I think will be very much in our interest and will tie them down in Syria and prevent them from consolidating control and make it harder for them to even think about external plots.

Ms. GABBARD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. FRANKS. Mr. Lamborn.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Chairman, and Chairman Hunter, it is great to see you again. And I am glad that you are engaged and sharing your experience and your wisdom with us. And so, I appreciate that.

I would like to ask about the Kurds. I have been distressed that the administration hasn't done more and I could give you many examples of allying with people who are naturally friendly and supportive of the United States, and trying to work—as opposed to working more with opponents or enemies who—we get very little back in return.

So with the Kurds, should we be doing more to establish relationships with them in Iraq or even in nearby countries. And I know we have strong ties with Turkey that we don't want to see go away, and with Iraq for that matter. But can we and should we be doing more with the Kurds?

Any one of you?

Mr. HUNTER. Well, I would say we need—we need a force right now to stand up to this invasion and this occupation. If the Kurds end up being the only hard point, absolutely, that accrues to the detriment of the ISIS and to the benefit of what we want which is an Iraq which is devoid of ISIS.

So they may be the only stand-up force if we don't do some of the things that we talked about here, like shaping up the Iraqi forces, bringing about some conciliation and also reengaging with our old Sunni allies. The Kurds may be the last strong point against this force, and absolutely we should work with them and help them.

Mr. LAMBORN. And any of you others?

Dr. BIDDLE. Our primary interest in this conflict is to stop the fighting and prevent it from spreading. There may some ways in which U.S. policy towards Kurdistan can contribute to that larger outcome. And my written statement describes some of them.

But there is also a serious danger if we focus on Kurdistan per se, we could end up making things worse rather than better for the larger conflict. This is a highly mobilized, ethno-sectarian identity

war in which the Kurds have mostly been able to stand on the sidelines but are not unimplicated in this larger conflict.

If the United States simply aligns itself with one side and loses leverage over the other two there is some risk that what we end up doing is encouraging the spread of conflict. I think the central challenge for the United States right now is if we are going to engage to the point where we are going to try and have some influence over the outcome rather than standing aloof and trying to limit our downside losses.

The only way we are going to actually end the conflict is if we get some kind of mediated power-sharing deal among the parties in which they all believe that they are protected against worst-case, downside outcomes.

Bitterness, fear, and jealously between Kurds and Arabs is part of this problem. And a simple American alignment with the Kurds that is not part of a larger diplomatic strategy for reassuring Sunni and Shia that their interests will also be respected is not necessarily a way to stop the war before it engulfs the region.

Mr. LAMBORN. Mr. Boot.

Mr. BOOT. I mean, I would certainly agree with that, we don't want to be seen solely as the champions of the Kurds, but I think we certainly should take advantage of the pro-Western orientation of the Kurds and the relative safe environment that they would offer and the professional, relatively professional military forces that they would offer to operate alongside American forces.

I mean, we can easily, for example, base JSOC squadrons in the KRG [Kurdistan Regional Government] where they could operate pretty effectively into Mosul and the other parts of northern Iraq. I think we ought to be doing that at the same time as we are also operating with the Sunni tribes, as well as with elements of the Iraqi security forces, to make clear that we are not choosing sectarian sides in this conflict going on in Iraq. But I think it would be foolish not to take advantage of the open invitation the Kurds have given us to station forces in their territory. I think we should do that.

Mr. FISHMAN. I agree with Professor Biddle's concerns about this. The tension between the Arabs and the Kurds in Mosul is one of the factors that allowed the Islamic State in Iraq to survive there after the defeat it suffered in Anbar, after the Awakening and the Surge.

The challenge here though is that I don't see a negotiated solution. I don't—I think that the accommodation that we came to in 2007 and 2008 was a function of the leverage provided by our ground forces on the ground. Those don't exist and I don't hear a lot of interest in pursuing that kind of commitment again.

And so, to be quite blunt, I don't think we have the leverage to produce that sort of accommodation. And I think we are not having—from my perspective having a conversation about those next-tier, suboptimal outcomes.

Mr. LAMBORN. Thank you all for being here.

Mr. FRANKS. Thank you, Mr. Lamborn.

I thank all of you for being here. I would express, again, a special greeting to Chairman Hunter. Your legacy obviously lives on in this committee. And we are all so very grateful that you are here.

You know, it occurs to me, Chairman Hunter, that the—one of the original objectives of the jihadist mindset after 9/11 was to try to gain some sort of base of operations with which to launch terrorist attacks and jihad as it were across the world. And it appears that they haven't given up that objective at all. And sometimes our administration seems to willing to stand back and not engage to the extent that the central question here, the central strategic engagement here is one of why jihadists feel transcendentally justified to do this.

And until we call it for what it is, it is a difficult thing to bring the tactics to bear. But now it seems like the administration is almost unwilling to even consider tactics to bear.

So ISIS, as we know, is rampaging across Iraq. And after dismissing ISIS as a threat, the administration has finally conceded that they are "worse than Al Qaeda."

And, you know, now that they are moving on the city of Nineveh, a city that has withstood 8,000 years of even biblical challenge, this administration has managed to put Nineveh at risk after 6 years.

So, my question to you, Mr. Hunter, given the incredible danger that ISIS represents, and the Christian community is almost extinct now in Iraq, how did we get here, where did we—there was a time when things were on track. Where did we fail and what is this situation now, what can we do now?

If you had been President, which some of us wished that would have occurred—if you had been President how would you have prevented where we have come to find ourselves and what would you do now in the untenable position that we find ourselves in now?

Mr. HUNTER. Mr. Chairman, first, thanks for letting me come in and share the dais here with these gentlemen who have a lot of expertise in this area. And it has been great coming back to the committee.

And I think I mentioned during my remarks at one point when I was chairman my son Mr. Hunter, the gentleman from California called me, he was a captain in the Marine Corps in the Battle of Fallujah, called me on the satellite cellphone and said what are you—and he had some fairly uncomplimentary words for all political leadership—what have you done, we have just been ordered to stop attacking. We are halfway through the Battle of Fallujah, we have got them reeling and we have been given an order to stop.

And in fact that had happened. Mr. Bremer had gotten cold feet. He had been pressured by the Sunnis. And so, he essentially ordered, even though he wasn't in the chain of command. He was followed by the combat leadership in Iraq. We stopped the attack at midpoint. We stopped our operation.

The bad guys rallied and they inflicted some pretty severe casualties on the Marines who were now in static positions.

To some degree that is a reflection of this conflict. I think that one thing that we see now, that Americans appreciate is that this conflict has legs. It is an enduring conflict. And it is also a conflict that doesn't come wrapped in neat packages. There have been great questions about well we are going to help these people or we are going to help these people. And implicit in those questions, well, where is the white hat? Where are the good people? Where are the moderates? Where is the moderate leader?

Because you can have great people in a region, but if you have got a leader that is a throat cutter, the persona of the people is not relevant.

So this is a very difficult area of the world which shifts like the sands of Anbar. And what we have to do, I think, are practical things. And the practical thing we could do right now is to try to blunt that attack. We don't know if we are going to see a post-Maliki leader in Iraq who is not worse than Mr. Maliki. For all of the problems that have been manifested in his time in office he has also moved under American leadership to do some things that we wanted him to do.

This is an enduring struggle. There is no—there is going to be no surrender on the battleship *Missouri,* so it is going to be one that is going to be with our children, with young people that are now 5 and 6 years old. They are going to be in the armed services of the United States deploying to parts of the world 15 years from now to engage in parts of this struggle.

What we have to do is have people of judgment in leadership positions, and we have to take action quickly and it is tough in this democracy to bring people to take action quickly. And I think one thing we would all agree on is we do need to take action and it needs to be taken quickly because time is fleeting, time is of the essence. The more the ISIS forces embed in Iraq the more difficult it is going to be to dislodge them.

They were really most vulnerable when they were flowing in in high numbers and were in transit and could have been taken out at that point with American air power. They could have been taken out with some Iraqi air power, in fact, if logistically supplied by the Americans. But there is no easy answer here.

And there are people who read their Quran in such a way that they believe that this is their—as those people on the airliner on 9/11 who had a copy of the Quran. There are people who read that and will continue to read it as being their mission is to destroy Americans, also in many cases to destroy fellow Muslims as we have seen in these conflicts.

It is very—the most difficult factor we have here is the ability to identify moderate, effective leaders who are—who will be good leaders, good people, who will not engage in brutality, and will not polarize under pressure to the extremes. That is a tough one to do and it is a tough one to find and we are seeing that same problem in Afghanistan, the post-Karzai government we think—we are hopeful it will be a much better one.

But that is the problem. And that is one that we have to live with. So what we have to do is be strong, militarily robust. We are sliding down the—we are losing a great deal of our military strength, if you have seen all the force projection numbers.

We have to maintain strong special operations capability, but we also have to have, in the executive department, in the President, the ability to call shots quickly and move quickly. And right now we don't have that. And I think time is against us in the Iraq, with respect to the Iraq situation.

Mr. FRANKS. Well, again, thank you for your service to humanity and the cause of human freedom, Chairman Hunter.

And I am going to give everyone a chance just to say a brief closing thought here before we adjourn the committee.

And we will start with you over here, Mr. Fishman.

Mr. FISHMAN. Mr. Chairman, thank you, again, for having me here today and to the entire committee.

As everyone has discussed, our options in facing the Islamic State are suboptimal. And I think—that considering that the best course of action is to contain this organization, to attempt to strengthen local governance, and to wait while this group makes mistakes, which it will.

Jihadi organizations from Algeria in the 1980s to Afghanistan, to Iraq 8 years ago are prone to make mistakes, they are prone to alienate the people that they live with and their constituency. And I think we can put ourselves in a position to capitalize on that when the time comes. But I am skeptical that we will be able to destroy this organization any time soon. It is going to be a persistent threat.

Mr. FRANKS. Yes, Mr. Boot.

Mr. BOOT. I think that it is true that over time extreme Islamist groups do alienate the people they rule, but I don't think we can afford to wait for some inevitable backlash to occur, because I think the longer that ISIS has to consolidate its authority the greater the threat to us will be, the more the chances are that foreign jihadists will be on its territory training for conflicts in other places including, quite possibly, the United States and Western Europe.

So I think we need to act. We are not going to act with overwhelming American military force on the ground. That is clearly not on the cards, but we do have potential allies that we can support and push forward into the fight with American advice, with American intelligence, with American weapons, and in some cases with American air power called in by American eyes on the ground. This is a very limited commitment but I think it is one that is well warranted by the alarming situation we face today in Iraq and Syria.

And I think we ought at least to be giving serious consideration to sending a force on the order of perhaps 10,000 personnel, mostly in an advisory and assistance capacity, as I suggested earlier, to Iraq to work with the various elements, not only of the Iraqi security forces but the Kurdish Peshmerga and the Sunni tribes. That is a force, by the way, roughly similar to the size that we are leaving in Afghanistan. And I think it is vitally important to have that kind of continuing American presence in Afghanistan because if that doesn't happen then Afghanistan could fall apart as easily as Iraq has done.

And I think we should learn—you know, we should, now that Iraq has fallen apart the situation becomes much more difficult, but it is still not impossible. And I think with a relatively modest American commitment, I think we are not going to necessarily eradicate ISIS, but we can certainly dislodge it from controlling as much territory as it has and put it more on the defensive and more on the run. I think that should be our immediate short-term objective, leading ultimately to trying to crush the group as we in fact did successfully in 2007 and 2008 with the support of the Sunni tribes of Anbar Province.

Mr. FRANKS. Dr. Biddle.

Dr. BIDDLE. As I hear the panel we disagree at least at the margin on how serious the threat is here and what the scale of U.S. interests engaged are. We all think there are important interests engaged. But the scale of them, I think, there is some degree of disagreement.

The panel also agrees that conditional assistance is the appropriate way forward for trying to realize the stakes we have involved. I want to emphasize though that although we agree that some degree of conditional military assistance is an appropriate way forward, the scale of leverage we can develop through assistance of the kind that any of us are interested in providing, even my friend and colleague Max is not talking about sending 160,000 American troops back to Iraq.

Given the scale of the assistance we are willing to offer, the scale of the leverage it is going to provide is going to be correspondingly small. And the danger of slipping from a policy of conditionality to generate leverage into commitment and unconditional aid because our conditions weren't met and we decided now that we are committed we have to act, or because our conditions were met initially and then there was backsliding later and Maliki's successor reneges on initial commitments.

These are very serious risks. And if we are going to take seriously the idea that conditional aid is going to be used as a lever to produce political accommodation in Baghdad that will enable a split in the Sunni coalition and an earlier settlement to the war, we are talking about a difficult, complex political-military tug of war with not just Maliki while he is in office, but any successor who might come after him and we should not underestimate how challenging that would be for the U.S. Government to pull off.

I think there are existence proofs that at various times and at various places the U.S. has been able to accomplish this. I think I agree with Chairman Hunter that General Petraeus and Ambassador Crocker were particularly astute at using sticks and carrots and conditional leverage to change the interest calculus of Nuri al-Maliki in particular and the Government of Iraq in general while they were in leadership positions in Iraq.

But we have not been consistently outstanding in our achievement of this goal in the past. And if we are not serious about persisting in a long-term political-military strategy, that if it goes wrong could produce terrible consequences, I don't want us to fail to take seriously the alternative of in fact not making things worse by staying out.

Mr. FRANKS. Mr. Hunter.

Mr. HUNTER. First, my recommendation to support the tribes is not a conditional one, not based on anything that Maliki could do.

Any of this—I think we should send our—the President and the Secretary of Defense could pull this team together, they would respond immediately and a number of them are still in service to this nation in other locations, and other positions, and re-engage the tribes. And any tribes that will—that are willing to oppose ISIS, we help them. Without any political conditions established outside of that—that they will oppose ISIS.

I think any conditional aid with respect to the government of Baghdad, obviously—I think what I would do without extracting political conciliation or political concessions from Maliki is to inventory the main divisions of the Iraqi Army, and if they have inadequacies, to meet those inadequacies if they will turn that army, if they will utilize it aggressively against ISIS.

And, you know, once again the 1st Iraqi Division was a good division, was effective at the end. They stood and fought. They held. They took ground. They worked professionally.

One thing that I haven't seen is an analysis of what has happened to that—to the 1st Division, the 7th Division, and several other divisions were fairly good, well, not as good as those but fairly good. And it is difficult to believe that they have deteriorated to the point where they can't take on guys who are coming in with 50 cals [calibers] on Toyota pick-up trucks, especially with the armor element that they possess right now and with a very limited air element.

So I think you are not going to achieve—any concessions that you can achieve politically from this government can, as we know, be changed very quickly by another government. And there will always be this Sunni-Shia split. And there will always be that dynamic playing in that government.

If we can nurture along what I called a grudging accommodation, which is what the Shiite government in Baghdad had for Anbar in the late years of the war, that is a victory and we could—but that is dependent on votes. You know, this is like Turkey, we urged them to take a vote, we taught them democracy when we wanted to send the 4th Division through Turkey. They took a vote and it was against us. And because of that we couldn't move the 4th Division through.

So we don't know which way this government is going to go. We know there will always be a bias. There will always be the pressure from Iran. There will always be the Shiite majority and that fissure between Shiites and Sunnis will always be ready to widen into a grand canyon. That is just the tendency that will be there.

I think we have to live with that, but I would unconditionally support the tribes that will push back against ISIS. And unconditionally support the equipping and utilizing American air leverage for the Iraqi army pushing back against ISIS. And once again that would have to be a very well-monitored operation because it would be against ISIS, not against the tribal elements in Anbar Province.

Mr. FRANKS. Well, thank you, gentlemen, it has certainly occurred to me that when you consider ISIS and how quickly they have risen, that it is reminiscent of a bunch of idiots, lunatics riding across France on bicycles wearing brown shirts and the Nazis finally began to find resonance. It was certainly dangerous to the world and it is important that we prevent that from occurring here.

And I hope that the vacillation and uncertainty doesn't begin to precipitate that very paradigm.

And with that I want to thank all of you for coming today and I am glad you are on our side. This meeting is adjourned. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:53 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

JULY 29, 2014

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

JULY 29, 2014

Opening Statement of Chairman Howard P. "Buck" McKeon

HEARING ON

Security Situation in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Policy Options and Implications for the Region

July 29, 2014

Good morning ladies and gentlemen. The committee meets to receive testimony on the security situation in Iraq and Syria, the implications for the region, and United States' policy options. Our witnesses include Dr. Stephen Biddle, Mr. Max Boot, Mr. Brian Fishman, and former HASC Chairman Duncan Hunter.

I would like to thank Chairman Hunter for being here today. It is great to have you back, and I know that your insights and your experience will be extremely valuable for the committee.

Also, I would like thank Mr. Hunter (Junior) for his suggestion to get the perspectives of those who know Iraq best, and to draw from their extensive experience as we consider a way forward. We have a superb panel today, and we are working to secure time this Fall to gain further insights from key military commanders who were on the ground in Iraq.

Mr. Hunter—like many of the veteran members of this committee who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan—has a unique viewpoint and strong voice to bring to these deliberations. I appreciate his engagement and leadership.

The security situation in Iraq and Syria continues to worsen. The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) now controls large swathes of terrain in the heart of the Middle East.

In Iraq, Al Anbar, Mosul, and Balad – all areas where countless young American men and women made the ultimate sacrifice to protect our security and to provide Iraqis a better future – have fallen under ISIS control. Iraqi Security Forces have folded upon contact with ISIS. Prime Minister Maliki has failed to create a coalition government and instead has chosen to send Shia militias into Sunni tribal areas to battle ISIS, exacerbating sectarian divides and violence.

In Syria, Bashar al-Assad remains in power, the moderate Syrian opposition has been marginalized – losing ground to both Assad and ISIS – and the foreign fighter threat has "become a matter of homeland security." Meanwhile, Iran has taken advantage of this moment to further reinforce its only ally in the region, Bashar al-Assad, and expand its influence in Iraq and beyond.

The landscape is incredibly complex: the sanctuary that ISIS now enjoys, the expansion that Iran is trying to achieve in this moment, and the fragile stability of the region – together – present strategic challenges for United States security and our interests.

The Administration's disengagement and inaction since declaring victory for leaving Iraq has been disturbing. I have urged the Obama Administration to engage, to look at the region holistically, and to outline a comprehensive policy and strategy for the region. However, thus far, largely what we have seen from this Administration are statements on what it's not doing and proposals that lack the rigor to match the problem that we are facing. For example, we received a request for $1.5 billion for a Syria Stabilization Initiative in the FY15 OCO budget

request that included no details. I thought our Ranking Member said it well when he told senior defense officials that we want to be supportive, but sell us – give us something to work with.

I acknowledge that there may be no good options. At this point, we may be looking at the least bad of the bad options. But we need more than inaction because we cannot tolerate ISIS having sanctuary, freedom of movement, and the platform to launch attacks against the United States and our allies. And, our moral leadership should not allow us to stand idly by while sectarian war engulfs the region.

We are fortunate to have with us today a panel of seasoned, thoughtful experts to help the committee understand the complexity of the situation, examine the spectrum of possible courses of action, the benefits and risks of those actions, and the consequences of inaction.

Again, thank you for being here today. I look forward to your testimony and insights."

Statement of Ranking Member Adam Smith

HEARING ON

Security Situation in Iraq and Syria: U.S. Policy Options and Implications for the Region

July 29, 2014

Thank you Mr. Chairman. And I would like to thank our witnesses for appearing here today.

The ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Syria present us with a series of complicated and interlocked challenges. U.S. policy in Syria has been to favor, to a growing extent, a moderate, largely Sunni, opposition in its fights against the Assad regime, which is backed by Shi'a Iran as well as various hardline Sunni terrorist groups, some allied with al-Qaeda and some too brutal for even that group to stomach. In Iraq, the United States is exploring what it can do to assist a government that is now, and is likely to remain, largely dominated by Shi'a, which is also backed by Iran, as that government fights against the hardline Sunni group that was most successful in Syria and which has to date been able to coopt Sunni unhappiness with the Shi'a regime. In short, this is a complicated situation that requires a thoughtful approach.

Meanwhile, Russia continues to supply the Assad regime with weaponry and has made some sales to the Maliki government in Iraq, and our regional allies have acted to support Sunni groups in both Syria and Iraq, not always making as clear a distinction between moderate and extremist elements as we might like. Finally, the ongoing violence in both these states has driven millions from their homes and often into other countries and regions, threatening the ability of Jordan, Lebanon, and the Kurdish area of Iraq to handle these demands and in some cases the internal stability of the governments of those actors.

I applaud the Administration's recent request for authority and funds to provide the Syrian moderate opposition with training and equipment. In the best case scenario, such an effort may put pressure on the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and the Assad regime, driving the regime to the negotiating table and weakening the ability of ISIS to dominate areas of Syria, threaten the government of Iraq, and ultimately establish safe havens to threaten U.S. interests, our allies, and potentially the U.S. homeland. In the worst case, and the conflict continues or ends with Assad emerging more or less victorious, it is likely that parts of Syria will remain violent and ungoverned for some time, and we will need to have influence with some groups who can help us ensure those areas aren't used to launch terrorist attacks.

I tend to favor the approach the Administration has taken so far in Iraq. I believe we need to move cautiously there—the United States must continue to push for an inclusive government that can reassure moderate Sunnis that their interests are protected as a precondition for any greater degree of involvement. The United States must show the Iraqi moderate Sunnis as well as our regional partners that we are not the Shi'a air force, but favor an Iraq that protects all of it's people and fights against extremists of any stripe. Having said that, I believe we also need to be thinking about what happens if we cannot achieve a political accommodation and cannot convince moderate or at least non-Islamic extremist Sunnis, to turn against ISIS. If Iraq

splits into three de facto mini-states, we should be thinking through what that does to U.S. policy in Iraq and the region.

I have only outlined a few of the challenges these situations present. And I hope that our witnesses today can help us think through these and other questions. For example, how do we think about Iran? While we negotiate with them over their nuclear deal, in Syria they back a government we do not while in Iraq they provide assistance to the regime fighting ISIS. How should we prioritize our goals in the region? Which takes precedence—fighting Assad? Pushing back on Iran? Doing our best to crush ISIS? And how much of any of this can the United States realistically accomplish? Finally, if that isn't enough, it does not seem that the unrest in the Middle East is going to quietly die down in the next few years, so how do you see the region evolving and what should the United States be doing to prepare for that future?

Again, I would like to thank our witnesses for appearing here today.

Outline of Former Rep. Duncan L. Hunter's presentation to HASC – July 29, 2014

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee,

Please allow me to outline quickly a recommendation for a retrieval of the situation in Iraq. Pardon my brevity. I will expand on the outline in my testimony.

To understand the current situation it is instructive to review briefly the American intervention in Iraq. The invasion in 2003 succeeded in a few weeks, in ousting Saddam and capturing his government centers. The occupation that followed proved arduous. In 2004, the Sunni wars in West and the Shiite wars in the East ignited almost simultaneously. When Fallujah and Ramadi flared, Al Qaeda terrorists flowed into Anbar province partnering with the native Sunni insurgency, which included a good deal of the residual of Saddam's old officer corps. Against this formidable threat, America's Marine and Army leadership developed in 2004, 2005, and 2006 an operational blueprint which combined conventional ops with a counter-insurgency plan. U.S. forces drove the wedge between Al-Qaeda and the tribes by, between firefights, building infrastructure and providing humanitarian aid. At the same time Al Qaeda wore out their welcome by brutalizing the tribes, taxing them heavily, taking their women and assassinating leaders who didn't submit. In September 2006, the tribes began to turn to the American side. By spring of 2007, Al Qaeda was being crushed in Anbar Province, with pro-American forces springing up and tribes sending their young men to join security forces in record numbers. In March 2008, the Iraqi Division was sent by Maliki to defeat Muqtada al Sadr's Mahdi Army in Basrah, Iraq's "oil jugular." This accomplished, the 1st Division with U.S. advisors, pivoted to the north and secured Baqubah. The Iraq war was over. In 2009, in Iraq we took less than half the casualties taken in President Obama's hometown of Chicago U.S. congressional delegations shopped where deadly firefights had taken place in 2004 and 2005.

Today, in 2014, ISIS forces have flowed across the Syrian border down the rat-line to the Anbar towns of Fallujah and Ramadi, quickly dominating the cities before moving north to take Mosul. The native Sunnis, simmering under Maliki's mis-treatment, have offered little resistance. The Iraqi Army elements in the contested areas faded quickly.

Let me make a recommendation:

First, the President and Secretary Hagel should put together the team that won the war in 2008. The Marine and Army leaders developed longstanding relationships with tribal leaders in Anbar. The Lt. Col. Paul Kennedy, commanding 2/4 Marines was made an honorary member of the key Abu Risha tribe when he pounded the insurgency there in April 2004, holding medical "open house" at the soccer stadium after killing three hundred terrorists. Army Col Sean McFarland protected Sheik Sattar two years later when the tribal leader announced his opposition to Al Qaeda. Marine Col Bill Jurney established "Joint Security Stations", manned by Tribal Police, Iraqi soldiers and U.S. Marines. The stations distributed humanitarian aid, broadcast news from Ramadi's loudspeaker system, and provided security for the neighborhoods. At the Syrian border

J.D. Alford partnered with the Albu Mahal tribe to destroy Al Qaeda presence in the "Wild West" around Quaim. Army Colonel J.D. McMaster cleared and held Tar Afar in 2005, using counter-insurgency tactics. Marine Col. Mike Shupp oversaw the re-population of Fallujah and held election there after commanding U.S. forces in the epic battle there in November 1004. Generals John Kelly and Jim Mattis forged strong ties with Anbar's leaders. General Allen retrieved Sunni tribal leaders from their safe havens in Jordan and persuaded them to rally their tribes against Al Qaeda. In the north Army Colonels Steven Townsend and David Sutherland brokered reconciliation between the Anbakia and Ubaidi tribes. Lt. Colonel Joe Le-Toile brought the Zobai tribe in the Zaidon into the pro-U.S. fold and with the dangerous 20th Revolutionary Brigade. Generals Petraeus and Odierno developed numerous relationships with governmental leaders presently in power in Baghdad.

Today, the key to blunting the advances of the ISIS forces in Anbar is the Sunni tribes. America's great resource here is the team of U.S. officers with long standing relationships with the tribes. We should use them. They should be pulled from present assignments and re-engaged with their counter-parts in the tribal structure. Where they have left the military, a special effort should be made to bring them back to the team.

With a substantial number of the tribes on board in Anbar Province, we have a chance of winning for the second time. We don't have time to develop new officers with key relationships. Let's use the resources we have.

The old team should, in re-engaging their tribal allies, be empowered to heavily arm all the old "awakening groups" which are willing to oppose the ISIS forces.

The Shiite government in Baghdad should be pressed to accommodate and partner with, the Sunnis who oppose the ISIS forces. Maliki's government squandered the relationships with the tribes that Americans painstakingly built. This is the past. General Petraeus should be deployed to lean on his old allies in the Iraqi military to get the 1st and 7th divisions into fighting shape, filling out inadequacies in equipment and munitions. One at a time, partnering with willing tribes, accommodating Sunni leaders who stand against ISIS, the Iraqi military, with American advisors can isolate and retake the cities that have fallen.

Once again, let's use the team that won the first war. Let's move quickly. Thanks.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: **Duncan Hunter**

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

_X__Individual

___Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
NA			

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
NA			

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
NA			

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014): NA;
Fiscal year 2013: NA;
Fiscal year 2012: NA.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2014): NA;
Fiscal year 2013: NA;
Fiscal year 2012: NA.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014): NA;
Fiscal year 2013: NA;
Fiscal year 2012: NA.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2014): NA;
Fiscal year 2013: NA;
Fiscal year 2012: NA.

Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Evaluating U.S. Options for Iraq

Statement by
Dr. Stephen Biddle
Professor of Political Science and International Affairs
George Washington University*
Adjunct Senior Fellow for Defense Policy
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the
Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
Second Session, 113th Congress

July 29, 2014

In early June, militants under the banner of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) launched an offensive that conquered the Iraqi city of Mosul, put to flight around four divisions of the Iraqi Army, and continued southward to within a few miles of Baghdad.[1] In the process, it established control of a contiguous territory comprising much of northwestern Iraq and eastern Syria. How should the United States government respond?

I argue below that none of the available options for response are without serious drawbacks. Of these, the least-bad choices at this point are a combination of limited, conditional military assistance designed chiefly to encourage Iraqi political reform, together with containment initiatives designed to make the war less likely to spread and to reduce U.S. vulnerability if it does. The next-best option would be a minimalist policy of containment only, with no direct military aid to the government of Iraq (GoI). Unconditional military aid is the least attractive of the available alternatives.

Each of these options affects, and is affected by, the civil war across Iraq's western border in Syria. U.S. interests in Iraq have long been affected by the Syrian war, and ISIL's establishment of a contiguous cross-border territory highlights this interconnection. As I argue below, the U.S. interests at stake in Iraq are largely regional issues affected as much by the

* sbiddle@gwu.edu; 202-994-5731. I would like to acknowledge the substantial intellectual contributions of my GW colleague Professor Caitlin Talmadge to this testimony. Responsibility for the argument, however, and any potential errors of commission or omission, are my own.

[1] ISIL is known by several names, including ISIS (the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham) and IS, or the Islamic State (reflecting its claim of state sovereignty over the territory it now controls). Below I use ISIL, but this is meant to signify the same entity others have described as ISIS or IS.

Syrian war and its consequences as they are by events in Iraq per se. The U.S. government's ability to shape events in Syria, however, is even less than its limited influence in Iraq. Below I thus focus chiefly on U.S. policy toward the GoI, inasmuch as this is our main opportunity to affect outcomes in the region. But I treat U.S. stakes in a context that includes both conflicts.

I assess these options in four steps. First, I discuss the prognosis for the Iraq war in the absence of U.S. assistance to the GoI. Next I assess the U.S. interests at stake in Iraq and Syria. I then evaluate three classes of options for U.S. policy: unconditional military aid, conditional military aid, and containment. I conclude with a more detailed presentation of recommendations and implications.

The Prognosis in Iraq

Notwithstanding ISIL's rapid initial advance, they are unlikely to topple the government of Iraq. ISIL gains continue, but the rate of advance has slowed dramatically and the front is now stabilizing as more reliable Iraqi Army (IA) units have become engaged and, especially, as Shiite militias have entered the war on the government side. Rapid Shiite mobilization and Baghdad's large Shiite population will probably prevent ISIL from driving GoI forces from the capital or advancing southward much beyond it. The war's acute crisis phase is thus over: the Iraqi government will almost certainly survive.

But this does not portend a government offensive able to regain control over ISIL-occupied areas in the old Sunni Triangle. Even U.S. Army and Marine forces with massive air support found these areas difficult to control before 2008; this goal will remain beyond the GoI's reach for a long time to come.

Instead the war will increasingly settle into three zones of relative calm (a comparatively secure Shiite south, Sunni west/northwest, and Kurdish northeast) separated by shifting bands of contested territory. Suicide bombers and other infiltrators will occasionally penetrate opposing territory, but most violence will occur in the contested zones in between, whose location will ebb and flow with the fortunes of war, as we have seen in Syria (and in Iraq itself prior to 2008).

Wars of this kind are rarely short. Of 128 civil wars fought between 1945 and 2004, only one-fourth ended within two years. Datasets vary slightly with war definitions and other details, but most put the median duration of such wars at 7-10 years, with an important minority of conflicts dragging on for a generation or more.[2]

[2] James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?" *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (May 2004), pp. 275-302; Christopher Paul et al., *Paths to Victory: Lessons from Modern Insurgencies* (Washington DC: RAND, 2013); David Cunningham, "Veto Players and Civil War Duration," *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (October 2006), pp. 875-892; David Collier, "Duration of Civil War," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 41, No. 3 (2004), pp. 253-273.

Such wars end in two broad ways. The first, and more common, is for the stronger side to crush the weaker. Especially in ethno-sectarian identity wars like Iraq's, this can take a very long time: in a war of survival against a sectarian Shiite regime posing an apparent threat of genocide, Sunnis face little choice but to resist to the last cartridge, as others often have.

The other endgame is a negotiated settlement in the meantime. Settlement can shorten such wars. But this requires unusual conditions: the stronger side has to prefer compromise to outright victory in continued fighting; the weaker side must trust the government not to crush it after rebel disarmament; rebels willing to talk must survive counterattack by erstwhile allies who would rather fight on; and both sides must trust the other to observe the agreed terms.[3]

To meet these conditions in Iraq will require, first, that the GoI be persuaded to accommodate Sunni concerns, and to make this accommodation credible to Sunnis. If ISIL looks better than genocide at the hands of a Shiite GoI, then no settlement will be possible and Sunnis will fight to the bitter end. Second, Sunnis willing to negotiate must be able to survive ISIL counterattack. Al Qaeda in Iraq brutally attacked realigning Sunnis in the 2006-7 Anbar Awakening; ISIL will do the same. U.S. troops protected realigning Sunnis then; only a professionalized, capable, demonstrably non-sectarian IA – which does not now exist – would be available this time. And third, there will probably need to be outside guarantees from credible international parties to help stabilize any deal in the aftermath – Iraqis are very unlikely to trust other Iraqis to this purpose. If the war is to be shortened, U.S. policy will need to promote these conditions.

U.S. Stakes in Iraq

Some now say we have no important interests in Iraq and so should stay out. Others say our interests are vital (though they rarely favor a major U.S. ground mission to secure them). In fact, our stakes lie in that awkward middle ground between the vital and the negligible.

These stakes fall into three categories: countering terrorism, preventing humanitarian disaster, and averting economic damage. As for the first, ISIL clearly means us ill, and deploys several thousand foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq, some of whom hold Western passports and could return as terrorists. The terrorism peril in Iraq is real, and cannot be ignored.

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[3] Some have suggested partition as a third possible end state for Iraq. Some ethno-sectarian civil wars do end in partition, as the Balkan conflicts did. This is very unlikely in Iraq, however. There are several reasons for this, including the persistent sectarian intermingling of central Iraq: the 2006 fighting reduced, but did not eliminate this. The chief difficulty with partition in Iraq, however, is the economic unviability of the natural Sunni homeland. Unlike the Shiite south or Kurdish northeast of Iraq, Sunni western Iraq and eastern Syria has neither oil nor other natural resources in sufficient quantity. Without this, the rump Sunni state would face a future of either grinding poverty or vassal status as an economic ward of an outside power beyond the control of Iraqi and Syrian Sunnis. Sunnis are unlikely to accept this. Others may try to impose such a partition, but without Sunni compliance this would not end the fighting – it would merely convert a civil war into an international one. Such a result would serve neither U.S. nor Iraqi interests, and is not a viable means of ending the war.

But ISIL terrorism is not a threat to the American way of life. A major terrorist attack would pose grave political risks for any elected official on whose watch it occurred – but without WMD, its objective threat to U.S. life and property would be limited. Terrorism has never posed existential costs to any Western state, nor has terrorism ever been a major contributor to aggregate morbidity-and-mortality in any Western society. Even post-1948 Israel has never seen a year in which terrorists killed more citizens than auto accidents did. This is not grounds for ignoring terrorism, but other dangers pose greater objective perils.

Iraq's humanitarian stakes are enormous. The Iraq war will probably look much like Syria's soon, and may in time look a lot like Iraq itself circa 2006. In Syria over 50,000 civilians have already died, with no end in sight; in Iraq more than 120,000 were killed between 2003 and 2011.[4] A renewed Iraq war of 7-10 years' duration could easily produce another 100,000 innocent lives lost. The United States has not often intervened militarily into ongoing civil wars on purely humanitarian grounds, but the scale of potential suffering here is large.

And far worse could be in store if Iraq's war spreads. Historically, civil wars of this kind often spill across borders. Of 142 civil wars fought between 1950 and 1999, fully 61 saw major military intervention by neighboring states at some point.[5] Subversion wherein states weaken rivals by supporting insurgency to kindle civil warfare is even more common.[6] The Iraq war may be especially vulnerable to such contagion dynamics given the deep Sunni-Shia faultline running throughout the region, the overarching regional proxy war already ongoing between Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran, and the continuing spillover from Syria into its neighbors. Of course a truly regional war would require many infections; it is not the likeliest case. But the prospect cannot safely be excluded, the cumulative risk grows the longer the Iraq war drags on, and if the conflict does spread, even partially, the consequences multiply accordingly.[7]

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[4] Fatality data are drawn from https://www.iraqbodycount.org/ and Laia Balcells, Lionel Beehner and Jonah Schulhofer-Wohl, "How Should We Count the War Dead in Syria?" Washington Post Monkey Cage blog, May 1 2014: http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/05/01/how-should-we-count-the-war-dead-in-syria/

[5] Data are drawn from Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman, and Stephen Long, "Civil War Intervention and the Problem of Iraq," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (March 2012), pp. 85-98; replication files are posted at http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/friedman/files/bfl_isq_data.zip. Note that these data use a less restrictive domain definition than those documented in note 2, thus including a larger number of lower-intensity conflicts as civil wars. This is conservative with respect to the intervention rate cited above, as intervention rates are typically higher in higher-intensity conflicts – hence the less-intense conflicts included in the data underlying the rate above would tend to depress that rate relative to a sample comprising more-intense wars; the sample in note 2 would thus presumably yield a higher intervention rate than the 43 percent figure (61 of 142 wars) cited above.

[6] Idean Salehyan, "The Delegation of War to Rebel Organizations," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (2010), pp. 493-515.

[7] A statistical analysis conducted before the outbreak of civil war in Syria assessed a greater than 20 percent probability that a renewed war in Iraq would spread beyond its borders to two or more neighboring states if Iraqi warfare lasted five years or more; arguably the current fighting in Iraq represents an initial stage in this process of contagion already, which would imply that the odds of further spread are now higher. See Biddle, Friedman, and Long, "Civil War Intervention and the Problem of Iraq," at pp. 94-96.

Finally, there are important economic stakes in Iraq. U.S. economic exposure to Gulf oil shocks may be declining as efficiency improves and U.S. shale oil and gas develop, but serious risks will remain for the foreseeable future. Oil is a fungible, globally traded commodity, and regardless of the source of U.S. consumption, any major reduction in world supply will increase prices, both to the U.S. and our trading partners. A serious reduction in Gulf production would be a globally significant economic threat.

The cost, however, varies with the war's extent and duration. A seven-year war that cut Iraqi output to 2006 levels but did not spread could remove one million barrels a day (mbd) from world supply; by contrast a regionwide war that cut production by 50 percent across the GCC could remove 13 mbd or nearly 15% of worldwide production. There are many uncertainties in estimating effects from oil shocks, but the best available analysis suggests that the first case might increase oil prices by 8-10 percent and cut U.S. GDP by four-tenths of a percentage point. This would be regrettable, but manageable. The latter case is a very different story. It would exceed the largest previous Gulf oil shock (the 1973-4 OPEC embargo) by nearly a factor of four; the best available analysis suggests this might double world oil prices, cutting U.S. GDP by 3-5 percentage points.[8] At 2014 levels, this would imply $450-750 billion a year in lost output.

A long Iraq war would threaten just such a reduction. Insurgents have strong incentives to weaken rivals by targeting their war-supporting economy, and Gulf states' pipelines, pumping stations, and other oil infrastructure offer a natural target. In fact oil's war-supporting potential is a major incentive for contagion in the Gulf: a classical strategy for weakening Sunni rebels would be to foment Shiite unrest in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province, embroiling the support base for Sunni rebels in a civil war of its own that would drain resources from Saudi proxies abroad. Or a deepening proxy war could persuade Iran to escalate by closing the Strait of Hormuz to weaken its Saudi foe. Sunnis face similar incentives versus Shiite infrastructure, and such dangers imperil every state in the region to at least some degree.

Taken together, these stakes are real but not existential. Of them, the economic stake poses the most direct threat to objective U.S. hard security interests. A regional war that cost the United States $450-750 billion a year in lost output would be a setback of major proportions. But even a long war might not spread, and even a war that spread might not engulf the entire region; a localized war with a limited effect on Iraqi production would pose much smaller stakes. And even the worst case, bad as it would be, would not be another Great Depression. The net result is a war that is too important to ignore, but not important enough to warrant total commitment or unlimited liability.

[8] Kenneth R. Vincent, "The Economic Costs of Persian Gulf Oil Supply Disruptions," in Charles L. Glaser and Rosemary A. Kelanic, eds., *Crude Calculus: Reexamining the Energy Logic of the U.S. Military Commitment to the Persian Gulf* (Stanford University Press, forthcoming), ch. 3.

Policy Options

U.S. options can be divided into three broad categories: (1) unconditional assistance to the GoI, (2) conditional assistance, and (3) containment without direct intervention in Iraq. Either the second or third are defensible, though the second is preferable.

Unconditional assistance could include arms transfers, training, advising, intelligence cooperation, increased surveillance overflights, or airstrikes. At best, these would affect the war's outcome at the margin. The GoI will likely survive the initial crisis without further U.S. aid; if so, this will become a long, grinding war fought in contested populated areas with intermingled and mostly irregular combatants. No plausible U.S. aid will change this. From 2003-8 the United States contributed vastly more air power than it is likely to do today – plus more than 100,000 heavily armed U.S. troops on the ground – yet even this failed to resolve a similar war promptly or decisively. A much smaller U.S. contribution now is very unlikely to transform such a conflict, especially when teamed with an Iraqi ground force of distinctly limited capability. In fact, such aid could make things worse by reducing Iraqi incentives to reform and professionalize the IA, or to accommodate Sunni interests politically. This is because either policy poses real risks for Maliki or his successors; if American airstrikes can at least keep Sunnis at bay, then why gamble with inclusiveness or replace handpicked loyalists in the officer corps with trained professionals whose apolitical selection could create an army unwilling to act as Maliki's political enforcers, and whose independence of mind might even pose a threat of coup d'etat? Simple assistance without enforceable conditions would thus merely lengthen the war by forestalling any meaningful settlement prospect – this would undermine U.S. interests, not advance them.

The real value of military assistance would be if it is *conditional* and can therefore be used as leverage to encourage the GoI to (1) create a professional, inclusive IA which could defend realigning Sunnis from ISIL counterattack and persuade Sunnis that they could trust it, and (2) accommodate Sunni interests more broadly through the political process. If so, this might shorten the war by building the preconditions for settlement, thereby limiting the damage to U.S. economic and humanitarian interests. Hence the second major option is to offer aid, but only on the condition that the GoI implements the necessary military and political reforms.

Conditionality's importance stems from the unusual circumstances needed to settle civil wars before they run their natural course. In particular, an early settlement to the Iraq war would require that the GoI exploit the natural fissures within the Sunni alliance – especially, those between an Islamist radical ISIL core and their more-secular Sunni tribal allies – splitting the latter from the former, negotiating with the latter, and isolating radical hold-outs who would then be too weak to wage war. This is essentially how Iraq's violence fell in 2007: in the Anbar Awakening and ensuing Sons of Iraq (SOI) movement, Sunni tribal leaders split off from their erstwhile radical allies in al Qaeda's Iraqi affiliate AQI (Al Qaeda in Iraq) and negotiated local ceasefires with U.S. military commanders. But splits of this kind are almost always violent.

Factionalism is a constant danger in insurgent movements, and defection by dissident factions threatens the others with annihilation by larger, better-equipped state militaries when the defectors tell the state what they know.[9] Self-preservation thus compels insurgents to put down incipient defections with brutal violence lest the defection spread, and radical Islamists like AQI have been unusually ruthless in this regard. For such a divide-and-negotiate strategy to succeed, would-be Sunni dissidents would thus require credible defenders to protect them from brutal counterattack by those still aligned with ISIL. In 2007, the U.S. surge provided such defenders. American troops were never liked, but when deployed among the Iraqi population in sufficient numbers they were able to negotiate local deals with would-be SOIs; Sunni tribal leaders who were willing to trust Americans in ways they would not trust Shiite IA leadership then gave the Americans crucial intelligence on AQI cell structure, whereabouts of bomb-making factories and safe-houses, and AQI roadside bomb sites. The combination of Sunni tribal knowledge of AQI and U.S. military firepower then quickly rolled up insurgent hold-outs and AQI, the insurgency shrank rapidly, and violence plummeted.[10] But for this to work in the future, an alternative to the U.S. military must be found. Today's IA cannot play this role: it is deeply sectarian and politicized, and will not be trusted by potential Sunni dissidents in ways that the U.S. military was in 2007. Nor will most Sunnis be willing to trust a sectarian GoI to respect their interests even if they could survive ISIL counterattack. For a 2007-like realignment to allow a negotiated settlement this time around will thus require both political accommodation by the GoI and a visibly, reliably professionalized and non-sectarian Iraqi Army that can credibly defend realigning Sunnis from ISIL counterattack. Given the political risks a truly professionalized military poses to Maliki or his successors, however, this kind of reform will not happen naturally or automatically – it will require effective outside pressure. And this will require leverage.

But this leverage is not inherent in the simple fact of U.S. aid or the scale of U.S. assistance. Merely providing aid does not create leverage – only if aid is conditional, with strings attached and a credible threat to withdraw it if the conditions are unmet, does aid yield leverage.[11] Unconditional aid gives the recipient no incentive to adopt policies they would rather avoid – if the same U.S. aid is forthcoming anyway, why adopt unpleasant policies preferred by Americans? For the aid to produce GoI policy change, it must be clear to the GoI that the aid will only be provided if the reforms are undertaken – and that the aid will be withdrawn if the GoI subsequently backslides or reneges on promises of change.

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[9] See, for example, Paul Staniland, "Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Insurgent Fratricide, Ethnic Defection, and the Rise of Pro-State Paramilitaries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (February 2012), pp. 16–40; and Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[10] For a more detailed account, see Stephen Biddle, Jeffrey Friedman and Jacob Shapiro, "Testing the Surge: Why Did Violence Decline in Iraq in 2007?" *International Security*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (Summer 2012), pp. 7-40.

[11] Empirical research shows little evidence that unconditional U.S. military aid causes recipients to adopt policies favored by the United States; in fact, unconditional aid recipients are *less* likely than other states to align policies with U.S. preferences: Patricia L. Sullivan, Brock Tessman, and Xiaojun Li, "US Military Aid and Recipient State Cooperation," *Foreign Policy Analysis* Vol. 7 (2011) , pp. 275–294.

And this implies that assistance should, wherever possible, be provided in revocable ways that can be turned on, or off, by degree. In 2007, U.S. logistical support to the Iraqi army and police served this purpose well: if Maliki refused to fire sectarian brigade commanders, those brigades could be denied fuel, food, or ammunition until he did.[12] Once we created an independent IA logistical system we forfeited this opportunity for leverage. We should avoid similar mistakes this time around. And a real ability to walk away is critical if the USG is to avoid being drawn into an escalatory quagmire should initial aid fail to end the war. Perhaps the greatest risk of any U.S. assistance to the GoI is mission-creep and escalation if limited efforts fail. Revocable means, framed in conditional terms with periodic marginal withdrawal for demonstration to the GoI, are an important hedge against this risk.[13]

Even then, real leverage is proportional to the scale of the carrots that are offered if the conditions are met; these carrots are not going to be enormous in 2014. Few have proposed returning a force of 100,000 American troops to help the GoI wage the emerging Iraqi civil war, and none of the options now commonly discussed are anywhere near this scale or importance. Given the real limits on the foreseeable scope of U.S. assistance, the leverage that will result will be correspondingly limited.

A realistic strategy would therefore have to be long-term and incremental: we are unlikely to have the leverage needed to produce rapid change. The achievable best case is likelier to be gradual reform encouraged by persistent pressure in the form of conditional assistance. Gradual reform is less threatening to the Iraqi leadership, and as such may be achievable with pressure on a scale that we can actually bring to bear. But this will require a long-term politico-military campaign aimed as much at the structure of the IA and the politics of the GoI as it is on the battlefield struggle with ISIL. In fact, the potential political leverage deriving from U.S. military aid, modest as it may be, is its primary contribution – no realistic scale of U.S. aid can end the war quickly or decisively on the battlefield. If U.S. military aid is to have any meaningful effect

[12] On the use of coercive leverage by David Petraeus and Ryan Crocker in Iraq in 2007, see e.g., Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), pp. 263-4, 341; Linda Robinson, *Tell Me How This Ends: General David Petraeus and the Search for a Way Out of Iraq* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), pp. 81, 156, 261, 331.

[13] A detailed discussion of specific military options is beyond my scope here, but it is worth briefly comparing some of the relative merits of transferring equipment, training Iraqi troops, and flying U.S. airstrikes in support of Iraqi forces in this context. In particular, airstrikes have the advantage of being entirely within U.S. control for the duration of the effort. If the GoI backslides on political commitments, U.S. airstrikes can be reduced or withheld, then restored when GoI policies change. By contrast, providing Iraq with an air force of its own by transferring attack helicopters, high-performance fixed wing aircraft, or armed drones offers continuing leverage only if the Iraqis lack the ability to support the aircraft themselves – real leverage requires a credible U.S. threat to withdraw support or maintenance in ways that would ground the aircraft if the GoI fails to sustain reforms. Providing a self-sufficient logistical infrastructure for sustaining such airpower would reduce U.S. costs, but it would also undermine any political leverage achievable from the aid. Training poses similar complexities. Creating a self-sufficient IA may or may not improve its battlefield performance, but it does not convey leverage. Training in perishable skills thus has very different political properties than more persistent skill development. If the U.S. is serious about using aid to develop leverage, then any aid must thus be assessed in its political as well its military dimensions – and the former is more important than the latter.

on the duration or destructiveness of the emerging civil war it will thus be through its potential effect on the GoI's incentives to reform. And this will require a complex, persistent, incremental effort that integrates military tools with political goals. As such, conditional military assistance must be seen as a long-term project wherein U.S. influence will be resisted at every step, and where the conditions will need to be enforced repeatedly through credible threats made credible by periodic, actual withdrawal of some or all assistance. If this is beyond the capacity of the U.S. government to manage, then we would be better served by withholding further military aid altogether: the result of unconditional aid could be worse than no U.S. military assistance at all.

Policies to create leverage in Iraq must also contend with Iran's ability to replace the U.S. if the GoI rejects U.S. conditions. This is not grounds for offering unconditional U.S. aid. But the GoI's Iran card does make U.S. leverage harder, and it means the U.S. should try to forestall the problem if it chooses to assist the GoI. Two approaches to this end warrant consideration. First, it is worth exploring policy coordination with Tehran to reduce the GoI's ability to play us off against each other. Second, it is worth considering the careful use of conditional sticks to accompany conditional carrots for leverage with the GoI. The GoI may be able to get assistance carrots from Iran instead of the U.S., but if the U.S. is prepared to impose costs on Baghdad if reforms are not undertaken this would be harder for the GoI to offset with Iranian aid. Such costs could include subtle U.S. signals of willingness to support greater Kurdish autonomy – or even Kurdish independence if this can be pursued without undue damage to U.S.-Turkish relations. Or such costs could include a major expansion in U.S. military assistance to the Free Syrian Army (FSA) or other relatively moderate Sunni rebel groups in Syria.[14] Baghdad is unlikely to draw fine distinctions among varieties of Sunni armed groups, all of which it sees as enemies. Moreover, Baghdad is effectively allied with Assad in Syria, and would surely view U.S. heavy

[14] Many have long argued for greater U.S. assistance to the FSA, and it is now U.S. policy to provide weapons and training to the group. This could be expanded, whether as part of a larger strategy for shaping GoI policy or as a means of securing U.S. aims in Syria per se. Aid to the FSA has many limitations in the latter role, however. Nonstate actors' military capability is shaped powerfully by their internal politics – in fact, such actors' politics are a much stronger determinant of their military power than their weapons, equipment, or training. And the FSA has deeply problematic internal politics, characterized by factionalism, rivalry, inability to coordinate policies, and inability to cooperate in pursuit of common goals. Given this, it is very unlikely that expanded aid will enable them to topple Assad or destroy ISIL. Instead, empirical research mostly suggests that expanded aid to the FSA would just prolong the war and increase its casualty toll: as a general matter, increased aid to one civil war combatant rarely enables decisive victory when the other side also has outside support. Instead, aid to one side typically spurs the other side's patron to increase its aid in turn. This yields greater firepower on both sides, which typically increases the violence, lengthens the war, and increases the casualty toll, but rarely yields a quick victory for either combatant: see, e.g., Patrick M Regan, Third-Party Inteventions and the Duration of Intrastate Conflicts, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vo. 46, No. 1 (2002), pp. 55-73; Dylan Balch-Lindsay and Andrew Enterline, "Killing Time: The World Politics of Civil War Duration, 1820-1992," *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 44 (2000), pp. 615-642; Nicholas Sambanis and Inbrahim A. Elbadawi, "External Interventions and the Duration of Civil Wars." Policy Research Working Papers, World Bank, September 2000. In the Syrian case, increased U.S., Saudi, Qatari or other aid to Sunni rebels would give Iran a strong incentive to increase its aid to Assad in turn, prolonging the stalemate but at higher levels of violence. U.S. aid to the FSA might help it avert potential conquest by ISIL should the latter grow strong enough to threaten this, but without some larger political strategy for war termination it is thus unlikely to achieve much more than this minimal goal, and could easily just prolong the war – which would increase the risk of contagion and risk undermining U.S. policy aims rather than advancing them.

weapons for Assad's enemies as a threat to both regimes. Of course the United States could not credibly threaten to punish Baghdad directly if Maliki turned to Iran for military assistance without Washington's conditions – but a combination of diplomatic gestures on Kurdistan and military aid to moderate Sunnis in Syria might nonetheless offer a prospect to inflict indirect costs that might help discourage a GoI turn to Iran and preserve some degree of U.S. leverage thereby.

Nor is Maliki's status central to U.S. leverage. Iraqi sectarianism is structural and systematic, not personal. Unless the underlying GoI interest calculus is changed by persistent, systematic U.S. conditionality, the next Iraqi PM will face the same incentives Maliki does. And the worst possible outcome is to visibly explore alternatives to Maliki without actually deposing him. In Afghanistan, this practice poisoned U.S. relations with Karzai in 2009; if the USG decides that Maliki's personality is somehow uniquely problematic then the U.S. must go all-in on his replacement and do everything possible short of violence to produce a different leader.

The third broad U.S. policy option is containment. This is not exclusive of the other two, and in fact it would reinforce U.S. leverage in conditional aid by enhancing the credibility of U.S. threats to walk away if the GoI declines reform. It should be pursued regardless of decisions on U.S. military aid. But it could also stand alone as an alternative to deeper engagement. In this role it would sacrifice whatever prospects that conditional aid might offer to shorten the war. But in exchange it avoids the downside risks of U.S. military assistance: it would not hazard entanglement and mission creep as any military aid would, and it would not discourage GoI/IA reform as unconditional aid would do.

Some containment measures are already USG policy, such as aid to neighboring states in managing refugee flows or diplomatic pressure on neighbors to limit meddling. These efforts could be expanded, however. Others, such as encouragement to Saudi Arabia to invest in less-vulnerable pipelines to circumvent the Strait of Hormuz or to accommodate Shiite interests in the Eastern Province to ward off Iraqi contagion, would be worthy but are unlikely to succeed given limited U.S. leverage in the region.

Among the most helpful containment policies might be to expand U.S. and allied strategic petroleum reserves (SPRs) to reduce U.S. economic vulnerability, and to explore the implementation requirements for their effective use. IEA procedures for coordinating international releases, for example, were designed for a different era; it would be prudent to review these to determine their adequacy for a much larger, longer-duration problem in the event of Iraqi contagion. The politics and market psychology of such releases could be complex; strategies to encourage calm may need advance preparation and test. Legal constraints such as prohibitions on exporting U.S. SPR stocks may warrant review to ensure that any releases yield maximum price restraint for a fungible commodity. SPR expansion would not be cheap, but compared to the cost of a major disruption it could be a wise investment. And unlike many other options, the USG can shape its own SPR expansion and use without others' assent.

Recommendations and Implications

Overall, then, no matter what the United States does, the Iraq conflict is likely to become a long, ugly, ethno-sectarian civil war whose duration could easily run another 7-10 years, and which will probably last at least another 1-2 years regardless of U.S. policy.

Americans have important, but limited, interests at stake in this conflict. Unfortunately, however, none of the options available at this point offers a low-cost, high-reliability way to secure these interests.

The least-bad option is to play the long game and orient U.S. policy toward shaping conditions needed to shorten this long war: the appropriate U.S. policy objective should be to end the fighting within 2-4 years rather than 7-10. The best route to achieving this end is to build U.S. leverage over time via strictly conditional assistance designed to nudge the Iraqi government gradually toward inclusiveness and accommodation of legitimate Sunni interests. If successful, this policy can eventually set the conditions needed to drive wedges between Sunni factions, split the coalition between ISIL and secular Sunni insurgents, marginalize ISIL radicals, and settle the war before it runs its natural course.

But this will require sustained, systematic conditionality in any U.S. aid to the Iraqi government. A short term overreaction to apparent crisis that locks the United States into unconditional assistance would reinforce GoI sectarianism, lengthen the war rather than shorten it, and undermine U.S. interests.

An effective policy must also include measures to contain the war's damage to the U.S. economy. Damage mitigation is partly a matter of shortening the war, but it must also include efforts to contain its effects. In fact, containment – alone – is itself a defensible policy. Though its upside potential is limited, so are its downside risks. Conditional aid demands a long, complex, politico-military tug of war with the GoI that could make things worse if it fails, and entrap the U.S. in a quagmire; it exchange it offers some chance to shorten the war, but its risks are real. Containment alone is the next-best policy, and any conditional aid strategy should include measures to contain the conflict and reduce U.S. vulnerability should containment fail.

The worst approach here is not under-reaction – it is over-reaction without conditionality. Assistance without conditions not only shares the risk of entrapment with conditional aid, it may actually make things worse by discouraging the GoI reforms needed to shorten the war. Among my most important recommendations is thus to avoid this worst-case policy, notwithstanding the inevitable calls from more hawkish voices to adopt it.

COUNCIL *on*
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RELATIONS

1777 F Street, NW, Washington, DC 20006
tel 202.509.8400 fax 202.509.8490 www.cfr.org

Stephen D. Biddle

Dr. Stephen D. Biddle is adjunct senior fellow for defense policy at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and professor of political science and international affairs at George Washington University. Before joining CFR in January 2006, he held the Elihu Root chair in military studies at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) and has held teaching and research posts at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA); Harvard University's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs (BCSIA); and the Harvard Kennedy School of Government's Office of National Security Programs.

Dr. Biddle's book *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battle* (Princeton University Press, 2004) has won four prizes, including the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Award Silver Medal for 2005, and the 2005 Huntington Prize from the Harvard University Olin Institute for Strategic Studies. His other publications include articles in *Foreign Affairs*, *International Security*, *Survival*, *The Journal of Politics*, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, *Security Studies*, *The New Republic*, *The American Interest*, *The National Interest*, *Orbis*, *Contemporary Security Policy*, *Defense Analysis*, *Joint Force Quarterly*, *and Military Operations Research*; shorter pieces on military topics in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *Boston Globe*, *Baltimore Sun*, *International Herald Tribune*, *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, *The Guardian*, and *Defense News*; various chapters in edited volumes; and 31 IDA, SSI, and NATO reports.

He has served as a member of the Defense Policy Board and has presented testimony before congressional committees on issues relating to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, force planning, conventional net assessment, and European arms control. He served on General Stanley McChrystal's Initial Strategic Assessment Team in Kabul in 2009, on General David Petraeus's Joint Strategic Assessment Team in Baghdad in 2007, and as a senior adviser to General Petraeus's Central Command Assessment Team in Washington, DC, in 2008-09. He holds an appointment as adjunct associate professor of international and public affairs at Columbia University.

Dr. Biddle's research has won Barchi, Rist, and Impact Prizes from the Military Operations Research Society. He was awarded the U.S. Army Superior Civilian Service Medal in 2003 and again in 2006, and was presented with the U.S. Army Commander's Award for Public Service in Baghdad in 2007. He holds AB (1981), MPP (1985), and PhD (Public Policy, 1992) degrees, all from Harvard University.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: Stephen Biddle

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

XX Individual

___Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):__one_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____one_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____one_____.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_Department of Defense (Army War College)_;
Fiscal year 2013:_____Department of Defense (Army War College)_;
Fiscal year 2012:_____Department of Defense (Army War College)_;

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_Adjunct instructor, Advanced Strategic Art Program, and Basic Strategic Art Program_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_Adjunct instructor, Advanced Strategic Art Program, and Basic Strategic Art Program_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_ Adjunct instructor, Advanced Strategic Art Program, and Basic Strategic Art Program_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_$7200_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____ $7200_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____ $7200_____.

Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014): The university has many federal grants, but none that involve me.
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

July 29, 2014

A STRATEGY FOR DEFEATING ISIS IN SYRIA AND IRAQ

Prepared statement by

Max Boot[i]

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow for National Security Studies
Council on Foreign Relations

Before the

U.S. House Committee on Armed Services
United States House of Representatives
2nd Session, *113th* Congress

Hearing on Iraq and Syria

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, members of the committee:

Thank you for inviting me here to testify about what is arguably the most pressing national security threat we face—the takeover of a vast swathe of territory in Iraq and Syria by the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). ISIS, once known as Al Qaeda in Iraq, has recently renamed itself the Islamic State and proclaimed a fundamentalist caliphate, with its de facto capital in Raqqa, Syria. Its territory encompasses roughly a third of Syria and at least a third if not more of Iraq. The fact that Islamist extremists have taken over an area larger than New England is not just of concern to Iraq, Syria, and neighboring states. It is of direct concern to the U.S. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, the self-proclaimed emir of this new caliphate, has made no secret of his animosity toward our country. "Our last message is to the Americans. Soon we will be in direct confrontation, and the sons of Islam have prepared for such a day," Baghdadi said in an audiotape back in January. "So watch, for we are with you, watching."

Even if ISIS is too busy fighting Iraqi Security Forces at the moment—something that it is doing with disturbing success—to focus on plots against the US, there is little doubt that its continuing control of so much territory greatly heightens the risk of international terrorism. Every time Salafist extremists have managed to consolidate control of territory, whether in Mali or Afghanistan, they have turned their state into a magnet for international jihadists who flock there to be trained and indoctrined. Some, it is true, never leave—they become "martyrs" while fighting against local enemies. But some small portion

travels abroad in the hope of attacking targets in pro-Western countries or in the West itself. Western intelligence officials estimate that some 10,000 foreign fighters have joined the battle against Bashar Assad and that 3,000 may hold European or other Western passports, including at least 100 Americans. And those figures are growing. Attorney General Eric Holder recently said that intelligence about plots involving terrorists based in Syria were "something that gives us really extreme, extreme concern. In some ways, it's more frightening than anything I think I've seen as attorney general."

The attorney general is right to be frightened. We should all be frightened by the existence of a jihadist terrorist state in the middle of the Middle East. The harder question is what to do about it. What I would like to do today is to offer some ideas for action in both Syria and Iraq, while stipulating that our chances of success would have been much higher if we had done more to address this threat before it had metastatized as much as it has.

BACK THE FREE SYRIAN ARMY

In particular, we had an opportunity in 2011, when the revolt against Bashar Assad started, to support the relatively moderate Free Syrian Army (FSA) to overthrow a hated dictator. Because we failed to do so, the FSA has been marginalized and more radical groups such as the Nusra Front and ISIS, which have received support from Persian Gulf donors among others, have come to the fore. In the meantime Bashar Assad has become increasingly reliant on support from the Iranian Quds Force and its proxies in the Lebanese Hezbollah. What is effectively happening today is that these two groups of Islamist extremists—one Shiite, one Sunni—are dividing the country between them. Unfortunately one of the few things that unites the two sides is hatred of the United States, the "Great Satan."

We would have had a much greater chance of achieving our goals in Syria—of denying that country to anti-American extremists—if we had done much more to arm and train the Free Syrian Army three years ago. But even now there is really no better alternative policy that anyone has presented. Simply standing by and letting the conflict continue is hardly a good option—not only for humanitarian reasons (the death of 170,000 people and counting) but also strategic reasons. As many predicted, the conflict has not stayed confined to Syria—it has spilled over into neighboring states, most dangerously so in the case of Iraq. But it has also destabilized Lebanon and threatens to do the same in Jordan. The impact of this barbaric civil war will only grow over time if we don't do something to contain the damage.

For this reason I reluctantly suggest that you support the administration's request for $500 million to provide weapons and training to vetted fighters of the FSA. I say "reluctantly" not because I doubt the desireability of supporting the FSA—in Syria it is effectively the only game in town—but because I doubt even now the administration's commitment to that cause. I note, for example, a July 16 article in the Wall Street Journal which says that the Pentagon only plans "to train a 2,300-man force—less than the size of a single brigade—over an 18-month period that probably won't begin until early next year." This is a scandalously low figure that will do little to turn the tide. The administration needs a much more ambitious program of support to the FSA which offers the only viable "third way" in Iraq between the extremism of Hezbollah and Al Qaeda. In fact FSA fighters are happy to target both of these prominent foes of America. They are ready to do battle on our behalf if only we give them weapons and know-how.

Granted, we have to be careful whom we support. We don't want to experience "blowback" as we did in the case of Afghanistan in the 1980s when, because of our reliance on Pakistani and Saudi

intelligence, much of our aid to mujahedeen fighters went to Islamist extremists such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani rather than to more moderate leaders such as Ahmad Shah Massoud. We can guard against this danger in Syria, if not foreclose it entirely, by having the CIA distribute aid directly to vetted Syrian fighters rather than relying on Saudi or Qatari intelligence officers to do so.

If we do provide more aid to FSA, its fighters can take the fight to both Shiite and Sunni extremists and inflict serious setbacks on them. At the very least this will distract groups such as ISIS from plotting terrorist attacks in other lands. Eventually, American backing to the FSA, if it were to include air strikes, as in Libya, has the potential to actually topple the Assad regime. If that were to happen, however, the US and its allies would need a better prepare for stabilizing the country after the fall of the regime than we did in Libya—or in Iraq or Afghanistan. Such planning should begin now even if the eventual goal—the fall of Assad—seems much further away than it did in August 2011 when President Obama declared: "For the sake of the Syrian people, the time has come for President Assad to step aside."

FIND AN ALTERNATIVE TO MALIKI

Even if the FSA cannot overthrow Assad anytime soon, it can at least put pressure on ISIS in its Syrian strongholds. We also need a plan to fight ISIS on the Iraqi side of the border where it has made rapid gains in recent months with its capture of Mosul and Tikrit to go along with its capture earlier this year of Fallujah and much of Anbar province. The task is complicated by the sectarian nature of the Maliki government. Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's anti-Sunni tendencies, manifest in his persecution of senior Sunni politicians and onetime leaders of the Sons of Iraq, have driven many Sunnis who once fought Al Qaeda back into the terrorists' camp because they see ISIS as the only defender of the Sunni community against "Persian" oppression.

Maliki's sectarian tendencies have also significantly harmed the fighting capabilities of the Iraqi security forces (ISF). The ISF, in fact, have been going backward ever since the withdrawal of American advisers in 2011. Maliki has repaced professional commanders with political hacks beholden to him. These sectarian officers cannot effectively supply or lead their troops. As the New York Times noted in a July 16 account:

> Volunteers are routinely asked to serve for days in temperatures above 110 degrees without enough water and are given little food. Often, they also must supply themselves with another vital item for a soldier: bullets and in some cases weapons. "We have old weapons and not enough ammunition," said Abdullah Hassan, 17, on Wednesday in Hoar Hussain, a district in northern Babil Province, barely 90 minutes from the center of Baghdad. "Sometimes they give us ammunition, but mostly we buy our own, and it is getting more expensive as the war goes on."

This particular passage describes the woes of Shiite volunteers hastily recruited to backstop the Iraqi army, but the army's supply difficulties have been just as drastic. The result has been a catastrophic decline in morale, manifested by the willingness of tens of thousands of Iraqi troops to run away when confronted with a much smaller force of dedicated ISIS extremists in Mosul.

As a result of the damage he has inflicted on his own armed forces, Maliki has been forced increasingly to rely on Shiite militias mobilized and directed by Major General Qasem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, who has been spending an increasing

amount of time in Iraq, often near the frontlines. He has been reported, recently, for example, to be in Samarra, one of the few major towns north of Baghdad still in government hands. As in Syria, the Shiite militias run by the Quds Force are brutal in dealing not only with Sunni insurgents but Sunni civilians. The result is a vicious circle: As the security situation worsens, ruthless Iranian-directed militias become more prominent in defending the government; their prominence scares Sunni civilians and drives them further into the arms of ISIS; and the security situation worsens some more.

How do we break out of this dysfunctional dynamic? We need a political strategy and a military strategy. The political strategy must begin with trying to get Iraq's parliament, the Council of Representatives, to cobble together a new government that is not led by Nouri al-Maliki. It is hard to imagine lasting progress being made against ISIS as long as Iraq's government is led by someone like Maliki who is so firmly identified with Shiite sectarian tendencies. Iraq desperately needs a leader who can credibly reach out to Sunnis in the way that Maliki did in 2007-2008 under American prodding—but that Maliki can no longer do with any credibility. This new leader must also accept curbs on his power that Maliki has refused to accept—in particular there must be a division of power in the next government so that one person cannot directly control both the Defense and Interior ministries as Maliki has done. This is necessary to reassure all sides that Iraq will not risk a return to dictatorship.

Administration officials have been paying lip service to removing Maliki, but even now I question whether they are doing enough to bring it about. This appears to be a second-order issue, relegated to the ambassador and occasionally to Vice President Biden. President Obama is still not getting involved in this issue personally and neither is Secretary Kerry. The president and his secretary of state are not calling Iraqi political leaders directly, and they are not talking about this issue much in public. They are focusing their public remarks instead on Gaza and Ukraine, among other issues. Given the high stakes involved in Iraq, much more direct and concerted presidential involvement is called for.

As long as Maliki remains in charge, providing blind, blanket support to the Iraqi security forces would be counterproductive. We should not willy nilly provide the ISF with arms such as Hellfire missiles and we should certainly not call in airstrikes based on their say-so. This would turn the US, as many have warned, into Iran's air force. But that doesn't mean we should refuse to play a more active role in rolling back ISIS as long as Maliki remains ensconced in Baghdad. In fact the more that the US does militarily, the more leverage we will gain over the Iraqi political process; whereas if we do nothing we effectively cede the entire political process to the Iranians and their proxies.

WHAT KIND OF FORCES WE NEED IN IRAQ

In recent weeks President Obama has sent a few hundred military advisers back to Iraq. Along with security elements, this has brought our troop presence there to 825 troops. This is a good start but only a start. If we are to have any success in rolling back ISIS, we need a much bigger presence of military and intelligence personnel to carry out four closely related missions: collecting and distributing intelligence; advising military units (not only from the Iraqi army but also from the Sunni tribes and the Kurdish peshmerga); calling in air strikes; and carrying out direct-action Special Operations raids. In the process our personnel must be careful to work not just with the ISF but with all three major, potentially friendly armed groups in Iraq: the ISF (or at least the elements thereof that are not under direct Iranian control), the Sunni tribes, and the Kurdish peshmerga.

Why do we need all four types of specialists?

Good intelligence is always the prerquisite for successful counterinsurgency operations, even more so than in conventional warfare, since in such a conflict the enemy does not typically wear a uniform. To arrest or kill your enemies, you must first identify them—hence the need for intelligence. The Iraqis have some good human intelligence capabilities, but they are very deficient in collecting signals intelligence and other types of technical data, and they have great difficulty in analyzing and distributing the resulting information. That is a task that American intelligence personnel, both civilian and military, can facilitate in "fusion" centers manned jointly with carefully vetted Iraqi personnel (from the ISF, Sunni tribes, and the peshmerga). US personnel have, in fact, already established two Joint Operations Centers with Iraqi personnel, one in Baghdad and one in Erbil, and both are now functioning, enabling personnel from both countries to draw on increased intelligence, including stepped-up American overflights of Iraqi territory.

The advisers can help buttress the professionalism of some of the better remaining Iraqi army units, such as the Iraqi Special Operations Forces, helping them to resist political pressure to target Sunni political figures. Advisers can also help with intelligence and planning functions, where the Iraqis particularly lag behind. Many Iraqi units remain intact and capable of providing effective resistance to ISIS; they are worth helping. At the same time advisers can serve as critical enablers for the peshmerga, which have many of the attributes of professional military units, and for the Anbar tribes, which are more unconventional and less organized fighters but can nevertheless be effective because of their superior knowledge of the human and geographical terrain in waging warfare against ISIS as they did during the surge in 2007-2008.

The combat controllers can call in air strikes—a mission we cannot carry out responsibly without American eyes on the ground to ensure that such strikes are being aimed at Sunni extremists, not simply at Sunni political opponents of Prime Minister Maliki. We saw in the early days of the Afghanistan war, in the fall of 2001, how effective a relatively small cadre of Special Operations Forces and combat controllers could be by calling in accurate strikes with precision-guided, air-dropped munitions. Such attacks rapidly broke the Taliban front lines and enabled the Taliban's overthrow. We should not expect such quick results in Iraq, but ISIS forces, which are starting to take on some attributes of conventional armies, will also be very vulnerable to precision air strikes especially when their fighters are on the move in convoys.

Special Operations Forces can help carry out each of the above missions, while their Tier I operators—in Delta Force, SEAL Team Six, and other elite units—can conduct the kind of methodical leadership targeting of ISIS that has become a JSOC trademark over the past decade. Based on carefully collected intelligence, JSOC raids can take out an entire tier of mid- and high-level ISIS organizers, leaving the entire organization vulnerable to defeat, even if such raids cannot by themselves defeat an insurgency as large as ISIS.

I do not have a fully realized operational plan to present to you, but my educated guess is that we are talking about a minimum of 10,000 troops including the logistics elements and security elements we need to allow the intelligence personnel, advisers, combat air controllers, and Special Operators to do their jobs within an acceptable margin of safety. That is coincidentally about the minmum number of troops that US commanders had recommended we leave behind in 2011 if we had been able to reach a Status of Forces Agreement with the Iraqis.

As we know, the SOFA negotiations fell apart and we pulled all of our troops out. But the lack of a SOFA has not prevented the deployment of 825 US troops in recent weeks and it should not prevent the deployment of thousands more, because in Iraq, as in other countries, we can deploy troops based on an exchange of diplomatic notes with the local executive. We do not need ratification for such an agreement from the Council of Representatives; the administration's insistence on such ratification in 2011 was a needless obstacle to obtaining a SOFA. In reality the greatest protection that US troops enjoy from persecution in Iraq or anywhere else comes not from a piece of paper but from fear of American power. Do Iranian Quds Forces fighters in Iraq have a SOFA? Of course not. If they don't need one, why do we?

SOFA or no SOFA, we should deploy a limited number of troops urgently not to take part in ground combat operations but in order to carry out the specialized missions specified above.

ONE COUNTRY OR THREE?

As suggested earlier, our deployment should not show favoritism to the ISF. We should spread our personnel among the ISF, Sunni tribes and the peshmerga, so as to maintain good relations with moderates in all three major communities.

Does this means that we should give up the ghost of Iraq? Not necessarily, since there is no plan to dismantle Iraq that will win universal acceptance. It would be particularly hard to divide mixed communities such as Mosul (divided between Arabs and Kurds) and Baghdad (Shiites and Sunnis). But at the very least we should acknowledge the de facto division of Iraq which already exists and work within that framework with whatever indigenous allies we can find. We should also push for greater reforms at the national level to devolve more power to Iraqi regions and provinces; a country as diverse as Iraq needs a more federalist system to survive.

The most reliable allies we have are in the Kurdish Regional Government and we should take advantage of their offer to host American troops in the KRG without fear of a backlash in Baghdad. (This would be a good perch from which to send JSOC operators and drones to attack ISIS in and around Mosul.) Likewise we should not try to block oil sales by the Kurds, however much they may rankle Baghdad.

But while the Kurds are the most pro-American element in Iraq, the Sunni tribes are the most important factor in stopping ISIS because only they can effectively contest ISIS for the support of Sunnis. There are fissures within the insurgent movement—in particular between ISIS and Saddamists, between religious fundamentalists and more secular nationalists—that could be skillfully exploited by US military, diplomatic, and intelligence officers. Given the tribes' nationalist sentiments, we must be careful of being too closely identified with the cause of Kurdish separatism. It was the defection of the Sunni tribes in 2007-2008, during the surge, which sealed the defeat of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Today it is once again necessary to do what we can to turn the tribes against ISIS—a task that will be significantly enhanced by a change of leadership in Baghdad but one that we must pursue no matter what happens in Baghdad.

CONCLUSION: THE BATTLE CAN STILL BE WON

I realize that the strategy I have outlined here is sure to be a tough sell with a war-weary American public—and a war-weary Congress. Everyone remembers all too well the nightmare that was the Iraq

War. No one wants to get involved in Iraq again. But as we have learned since 2011, there are costs not only to American engagement—there are also costs to American disengagement. In Iraq and Syria we are seeing a particularly severe cost: the emergence of a new fundamentalist state that is likely to threaten us even more than the Taliban did in Afghanistan.

I wish there were some way to roll back ISIS's advances without greater American military involvement. But there isn't. Again, I stress I am not advocating fighting another ground war. What I am advocating is a prudent and limited deployment of American trainers, special operators, air controllers and intelligence agents whose primary job will be to mobilize indigenous opposition to ISIS. Such opposition exists because in every country where Islamist fundamentalists have come to power their Draconian decrees have triggered a backlash from ordinary people who want to be left alone to live their lives. The job of our armed forces, our diplomats, and our intelligence community is to catalyze and channel that backlash to prevent Al Qaeda-aligned extremists from winning their most significant victory since 9/11.

The good news is that the battle is far from lost. The situation in Iraq may seem hopeless today. But remember that the outlook appeared even more pessimistic in late 2006 when the senior Marine intelligence officer was writing off Anbar province and the widespread assumption was that the war was lost. But as General David Petraeus said back then, "Hard is not hopeless." Petraeus and the troops under his command proved that with the success of "the surge" which dismantled Al Qaeda in Iraq, brought violence down by 90%, and allowed Iraqi politics to function again. Similar success can be possible today and without nearly as big a troop commitment as long as we are skillful in mobilizing and enabling indigenous opposition in both Syria and Iraq to the violent fanatics of ISIS.

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[i] Max Boot is a military historian and foreign-policy analyst. The Jeane J. Kirkpatrick senior fellow in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, he is the author of three widely acclaimed books: *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (2002), *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (2006), and, most recently, the New York Times best-seller *Invisible Armies: The Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present* (2013). Max Boot is also a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard and The Los Angeles Times, a blogger for Commentary, and a regular contributor to The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, and many other publications. Max Boot has advised military commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan, and his books have been assigned reading by the military services. He was a senior foreign policy adviser to the McCain campaign in 2007-2008 and a defense policy adviser to the Romney campaign in 2011-2012. He is now writing two books for Norton/Liveright: a biography of Ronald Reagan and a biography of General Edward Lansdale, the legendary Cold War counterinsurgent.

COUNCIL on FOREIGN RELATIONS

58 East 68th Street, New York, New York 10065
tel 212.434.9400 fax 212.434.9800 www.cfr.org

Max Boot

Max Boot is one of America's leading military historians and foreign-policy analysts. The Jeane J. Kirkpatrick Senior Fellow in National Security Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, Boot is also a contributing editor to the *Weekly Standard* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and a regular contributor to the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Commentary*, and other publications.

Boot's newest book, *Invisible Armies: An Epic History of Guerrilla Warfare from Ancient Times to the Present*, was released in January 2013 by W.W. Norton & Co./Liveright and immediately became a New York Times Bestseller. It was acclaimed as "enormous, brilliant, and important" (Michael Korda, the *Daily Beast*) and "thoughtful, smart, fluent, with an eye for the good story" (Michael Mazower, *New York Times Book Review*, front page). John Nagl wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that "Mr. Boot's impressive work of military history is destined to be the classic account of what may be the oldest as well as the hardest form of war."

His previous book, *War Made New: Technology, Warfare, and the Course of History, 1500 to Today* (Gotham Books, 2006), has been hailed as a "magisterial survey of technology and war" by the *New York Times* and "brilliantly crafted history" by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Boot's first book of military history, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (Basic Books) was selected as one of the best books of 2002 by numerous newspapers, won the 2003 General Wallace M. Greene Jr. Award from the Marine Corps Heritage Foundation as the best nonfiction book pertaining to Marine Corps history, and has been placed on Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Navy professional reading lists. More than 100,000 copies of his books are in print.

Boot has served as an adviser to U.S. commanders in Iraq and Afghanistan. He was also a senior foreign policy adviser to John McCain's presidential campaign in 2007–2008 and a defense policy adviser to Mitt Romney's campaign in 2011–2012.

Boot is a frequent public speaker and guest on radio and television news programs, both at home and abroad. He has lectured on behalf of the U.S. State Department and at many military institutions, including the Army, Navy, and Air War Colleges, the Australian Defense College, the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School, and West Point.

In 2004, he was named by the World Affairs Councils of America as one of "the 500 most influential people in the United States in the field of foreign policy." In 2007, he won the Eric Breindel Award for Excellence in Opinion Journalism, given annually to a writer who exhibits "love of country and its democratic institutions" and "bears witness to the evils of totalitarianism."

Before joining the Council in 2002, Boot spent eight years as a writer and editor at the *Wall Street Journal*, the last five years as op-ed editor. From 1992 to 1994 he was an editor and writer at the *Christian Science Monitor*.

Boot holds a bachelor's degree in history, with high honors, from the University of California, Berkeley (1991), and a master's degree in history from Yale University (1992). He was born in Russia, grew up in Los Angeles, and now lives in the New York area. He has three children: Victoria, Abigail, and William.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: Max Boot

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

_X_ Individual

___ Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
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Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
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Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Prepared Testimony to the House Armed Services Committee

The Islamic State: A Persistent Threat

Brian Fishman
Counterterrorism Research Fellow
International Security Program at the New America Foundation

July 29, 2014

Chairman McKeon, Ranking Member Smith, Members of the Committee, thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to testify today.

Summary and Policy Recommendations

Though the challenges to American interests in the Middle East could hardly be more complex or interrelated, I will attempt to focus sharply on the danger posed by the so-called Islamic State, which today controls approximately 30 percent of Syria and significant portions of Iraq.

The Islamic State is a severe threat to American interests in the Middle East, and the safe haven it represents significantly increases the risk of terrorism directed against Western Europe and the U.S. homeland. But the United States has limited policy options for countering the new Islamic State because defeating the group depends on more stable and non-sectarian governance in both Iraq and Syria, neither of which are forthcoming.

We must be clear-eyed about the resilience of the Islamic State; it is unlikely to be destroyed any time soon and returning to the status quo ante is an increasingly improbable option. At the same time, ignoring the group is unacceptable because it threatens to expand instability outside of Iraq and Syria, including to key countries such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Islamic State aims to upend and then replace all existing order in the Middle East—and has a disconcerting amount of power to invest in that grandiose mission. The Islamic State has essentially upended sovereignty and the post-Ottoman national borders in the Middle East. They have created a new reality on the ground and, despite the unsavoriness, our policy should reflect those practical facts rather than hew to the whims of mapmakers a century ago. Any coherent response to the Islamic State must approach the problem regionally, avoid being stove-piped into distinct nation-state based conversations, and reflect a willingness to support and significantly engage non-state actors like the Kurdish Regional Government.

As such, I will describe here a military and political strategy to contain the Islamic State by strengthening friendly regimes on its periphery, empowering a narrow

class of vetted militants willing to target it, and laying the political foundation to capitalize on the governance failures the Islamic State is almost certain to commit.

In conventional military terms, the Islamic State is the most powerful jihadi entity in the world—and it has no real competitors, including al-Qaeda. But unlike al-Qaeda, the Islamic State is focused *primarily* on regional power projection rather than global terrorism. Nonetheless, the Islamic State is so large and multifaceted (including several thousand foreign fighters) that it would be surprising if sub-groups did not intend such strikes—and U.S. policy toward the Islamic State should account for that risk.[i]

The Islamic State does have weaknesses, most notably that its political alliances are likely to deteriorate as the Islamic State continues to institute its strict version of Shariah. By the standards of an intransigent jihadi organization, the Islamic State is surprisingly effective at building alliances. But it is one thing to establish a coalition designed for war against a common enemy, and another to sustain that alliance over issues of governance in times of peace.

Considering these strengths and weaknesses, U.S. strategy should aim to contain the Islamic State while strengthening governance in the region to the point where local actors can engage it more decisively. In order to pursue those goals, the United States should:

- One, actively bolster U.S. allies in Jordan and Turkey (despite Turkey's mixed record of countering jihadi groups in Syria). Jordan is particularly important because it is the most likely target and instability in Jordan would have deeply destabilizing effects vis a vis both Israel and Saudi Arabia. Support to both countries means both military assistance and significant aid to support and stabilize Syrian refugee populations.

- Two, support vetted Syrian rebels with appropriate military equipment—and do so through both covert and overt means. For example, the Congress should support the President's request for $500 million in military aid to Syrian rebels, with the following cautions:

    - First, recognize that $500 million in military assistance may be enough to slow the Islamic State's operational momentum, but will not destroy either the Islamic State or the Assad regime. This level of assistance buys time and may shift the military balance operationally in key areas, but it will not change the basic strategic problem. Moreover, assistance based on the President's $500 million request may not matriculate for a year or more. A comprehensive policy to annihilate the Islamic State is likely to require many years and tens, if not hundreds, of billions of dollars.

- Second, aid to rebels should be narrowly targeted to groups with the precision and fortitude to weaken the Islamic State materially, but there should not be a requirement that those groups are secular.

- Third, target assistance to a limited set of groups. Many of the Islamic State's current allies in Iraq were once considered vetted former rebels and tacit American allies.

- Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, aid to any rebel group should be structured so that it can be sustained. Better not to provide military assistance at all then drop significant weaponry into a shifting battlefield and then withdraw.

- Three, prepare to use limited military force against the Islamic State to slow its operational momentum or destroy key resources. Policymakers should be clear, however, that using force against the Islamic State has risks, most importantly that it increases the likelihood that the Islamic State will allocate more resources to targeting Western Europe and the United States.

  - If the President and Congress determine that a concerted military operation to undermine the Islamic State is warranted, they should pursue a new Authorization for the Use of Military Force rather than rely on either the 2001 AUMF for al-Qaeda or the 2002 AUMF for Iraq.

  - The 2001 AUMF should not be utilized because the Islamic State is not part of the al-Qaeda organization. Although there is precedent for using the AUMF to conduct strikes against organizations affiliated with al-Qaeda, the Islamic State is effectively al-Qaeda's sworn enemy, despite the groups' ideological similarities. If the 2001 AUMF can be used to justify strikes against one of al-Qaeda's enemies, it is not clear whether there are any limits on the groups that can be attacked using that authorization.

  - The 2002 AUMF authorizes the use of force to limit threats "from Iraq," which some suggest offers justification to target the Islamic State. Whether or not that legal interpretation is valid, countering the Islamic State was clearly not the original intent of the 2002 AUMF—al-Qaeda in Iraq was not even established until 2004—and we should not authorize sending Americans to kill, and potentially die, using legal loopholes.

- Four, provide military assistance to Iraq to bolster the defense of Baghdad and push back on the Islamic State. Blunting the Islamic State militarily is likely to encourage dissension among its coalition partners, many of whom do not share its vision of governance. We should not defer responsibility for

supporting the defense of Iraq to Iran, which will only entrench it in Iraqi politics further and harden Sunni antipathy toward the Iraqi government, which strengthens the Islamic State.

- Five, pursue a long-term strategy to improve governance in Iraq and Syria. We must not assume that Bashar al-Assad will one day fall or that the Iraqi government will drop its penchant for sectarianism. Rather, the United States should support entities, such as the Kurdish Regional Government, that can govern functionally. The policy paradigm should be to reduce the extent of ungoverned territory however possible rather than build policy within the framework of the two existing states.

- Six, refocus American policy and intelligence assets toward a broader range of jihadi threats rather than narrowly on actors focused on striking the U.S. homeland. Contrary to much public discourse, which has portrayed the Islamic State's rise as sudden, this organization (and its predecessors) has been one of the most active terrorist organizations in the world since 2004—and that trend includes the period from 2008-2011, immediately after the Surge but prior to the Syrian civil war. Although the strength of the Islamic State is somewhat surprising, it was clear as early as the fall of 2011 that the Islamic State of Iraq was well-positioned to capitalize on the Syrian civil war and would dramatically grow in strength. We did not pay enough attention.

I regret to say that this recommended course of action is unlikely to achieve the goal of destroying the Islamic State in the near term. But the United States does not have policy levers to defeat the Islamic State without massive and politically untenable intervention in both Iraq and Syria. Fortunately, Jihadi organizations have a long track record of self-destruction—and the Islamic State's extremism will create enemies. Still, the Islamic State will not be defeated without progress on the broader political challenges facing Iraq and Syria. As a result, the best approach for now is to bolster allies, strengthen our political leadership in the region, creatively undermine the Islamic State, and build for the future.

Background and Analysis

The remainder of this testimony provides a detailed background on the Islamic State and the threat it poses.

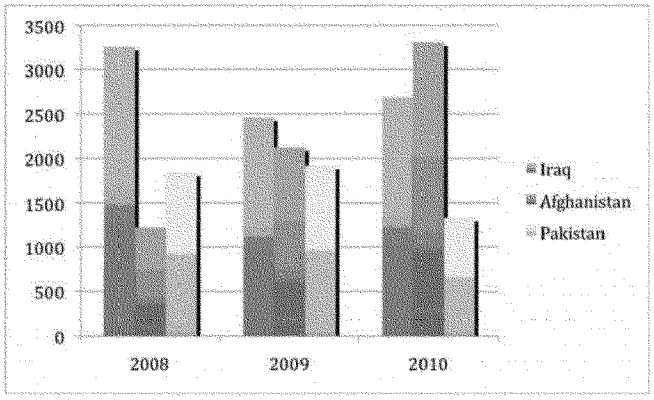
Where Did the Islamic State Come From?

The Islamic State is the most current incarnation of the organization originally led by Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the infamous leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. The group's roots go back to Jordan in the mid-1990s when Zarqawi and a jihadi ideologue named Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi plotted attacks against the Jordanian government. After being released from prison in 1999, Zarqawi moved to

Afghanistan, but did not swear allegiance to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Zarqawi relocated to Northern Iraq, where he prepared for the U.S. invasion. In October 2004, more than 18 months after the invasion of Iraq, Zarqawi finally swore allegiance to bin Laden and created al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). AQI's rampant brutality was unpopular in Iraq and in January 2006, the group changed its name to the Mujahidin Shura Council in the hope of establishing better rapport locally. Following Zarqawi's death in a June 2006 U.S. airstrike, the Islamic State of Iraq was declared in October 2006. This was the first establishment of an Islamic State by this group and the first practical step toward ultimately declaring a Caliphate.

The ISI suffered major setbacks at the hands of U.S. military forces and tribal groups during the Anbar Awakening and the Surge in 2006 and 2007, but it was never defeated. As Chart 1 illustrates, terrorism remained rampant in Iraq even after the Surge, much of it attributable to the remnants of the ISI. Instead of being defeated the ISI retreated from Anbar Province to Northern Iraq near Mosul, where it was able to survive by capitalizing on simmering tension between Arabs and Kurds in the city and continued dissatisfaction among Sunnis in Iraq with perceived Iranian influence and sectarianism in the Maliki government.

Chart 1: Terrorist Attacks in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan 2008-2010[ii]



The ISI and its predecessor AQI were well-disposed to capitalize on the uprising in Syria. The group had extensive logistics networks for foreign fighters transiting Syria, some of which appear to have operated with the tacit acceptance of the Assad regime.[iii] In short, the ISI was already in Syria when the uprising against Bashar al-Assad began in the summer of 2011.

In January 2012, the Islamic State formalized its efforts inside Syria by establishing a jihadi organization called Jabhat al-Nusrah, which was tasked with operating there. But strategic and personality differences between the Nusrah leader, Abu Muhammad al-Jawlani, and the Emir of ISI, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, compelled the ISI to expand its direct influence in Syria. Unlike al-Baghdadi, al-Jawlani still looked to al-Qaeda central for guidance and endeavored to build collaborative relationships with a broad range of Syrian rebels. In April 2013, the ISI officially changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, which reflected its claim over a broader territory and de facto severing of ties with Nusrah. After months of fighting between Jabhat al-Nusrah and ISIL, al-Qaeda's Emir Ayman al-Zawahiri official renounced ISIL in February 2014. In June 2014, after a major offensive in Iraq, which began in its long-time safe-haven of Mosul, the group declared a Caliphate with supposed authority from North Africa to South Asia.

Is the Islamic State al-Qaeda?

Despite a shared history, common ideological principles, and continued operational contact, the Islamic State is not a component of the al-Qaeda organization and has considered itself distinct since October 2006. Al-Qaeda in Iraq was created in October 2004 when Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi swore allegiance to Osama bin Laden after several months of negotiations with al-Qaeda's core leadership. But Zarqawi's relationship with al-Qaeda was always rocky. He wanted to expand AQI's writ outside of Iraq—primarily to Jordan—whereas al-Qaeda's leadership urged him to focus on Iraq itself.

The framework for the current split was established in October 2006, several months after Zarqawi's death, when AQI declared the Islamic State of Iraq. Although Ayman al Zawahiri seems to have had a hand in the timing of the ISI's creation—he called on AQI's leaders to create a *al-Dawlah al-Islāmīyah fī al-'Irāq* (the Islamic State of Iraq) in his June 2006 eulogy for Zarqawi—the establishment of a so-called "state" created tension with al-Qaeda's leadership. At the time, AQI was "dissolved" and subsumed within the ISI, which named an Emir that theoretically had authority for governance in jihadi-dominated parts of Iraq.[iv] That leader was even referred to at the time as the Commander of the Faithful, and was positioned as a future Caliph, much as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been today. ISI leaders even declared a cabinet with Ministers of Fisheries and Petroleum and occasionally did low-level public works projects. The Islamic State practice of governance that has gotten so much press recently is not new, though it is more effective now.

The squabbles over hierarchy between the Islamic State and al-Qaeda also reflect three major strategic and ideological differences between al-Qaeda and the Islamic State:

- Whereas al-Qaeda since 1998 has prioritized attacks against the U.S. homeland and targets in Western Europe, the Islamic State aims first to establish political authority in the Middle East. In this regard, al-Qaeda is

actually the outlier within the jihadi tradition. Most current and historic jihadi organizations focus on local conflicts rather than global terrorism.

- Following in the footsteps of Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, the Islamic State has utilized a much looser understanding of *takfir* than al-Qaeda has traditionally advocated. This means that the Islamic State declares Muslims subject to violence even more often than al-Qaeda does—a fact that is reflected in its contentious battles with other militants in both Iraq and Syria. The State also delegates authority for that weighty decision away from religious scholars and towards military leaders.
- Lastly, the Islamic State believes that it has declared a Caliphate with Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi as Caliph and the supposed leader of all Muslims. This designation remains controversial even among jihadis, but it means that followers of the Islamic State feel no ideological compulsion to follow the dictates of Ayman al-Zawahiri and other leaders of al-Qaeda Central.

Despite these differences, the Islamic State and its predecessors did not openly break from al-Qaeda until 2012, when the conflict with Jabhat al-Nusrah over authority and strategic direction in Syria became clear—and that process led to Ayman al-Zawahiri's pointed denunciation of ISIL in February 2014, in which he argued that ISIS, "is not a branch of al-Qaeda…and does not have an organizational relationship with it."

What Kind of Threat Does the Islamic State Pose to the United States?

Threat is a function of capability and intent. And in both respects, the Islamic State poses a larger threat to United States' interests in the Middle East than the homeland. The group not only prioritizes attacks in the Middle East, it also controls an Army that is most useful for projecting power regionally: the Humvees it captured from the Iraqi Army will not be used for strikes against the U.S. homeland.

The Islamic State also poses a significant threat to the U.S. homeland. Although less disposed to international strikes than al-Qaeda, that is hardly a reassuring standard. More importantly, the comparison is not the most useful for designing policy. The Islamic State's control of territory is reminiscent of the pre-9/11 Taliban more than al-Qaeda—and just as the Taliban did, the Islamic State may offer safe-haven to groups with internationalist agendas.

Moreover, the Islamic State is not a monolithic organization. Although the group's leadership prioritizes establishing governance in Iraq and Syria over striking the United States, that likely does not extend to all rank and file members, many of whom are foreign fighters. Open source research suggests that up to 11,000 foreign fighters have traveled to Syria since the Civil War began and that the vast majority of those have joined either the Islamic State or the al-Qaeda-affiliated group, Jabhat al-Nusrah.[v] Only 1 of 9 Muslim foreign fighters goes on to conduct terrorist attacks after they leave an open battlefield.[vi] Nonetheless, even that number suggests a

significant number of fighters may strive to continue militancy outside of Iraq and Syria in the future—with or without direction from the Islamic State leadership.

Critically, these foreign fighters appear to be getting useful battlefield experience. Unlike the period from 2006-2008, when foreign fighters joining the ISI in Iraq were largely thrown pell-mell into suicide attacks, the bulk of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq today are gaining relevant military experience, including bomb-making, marksmanship, and the ability to move effectively on the battlefield. This tactical experience increases the threat that they pose outside of Iraq and Syria.

Lastly, the Islamic State and its predecessor organizations have been linked to various plots outside of the Middle East. Officials in Britain, Italy, Kosovo, France, and the Netherlands have all disrupted plots linked to individuals that reportedly had fought in Syria (though not all with the Islamic State).[vii] On May 24 of this year, a man named Mehdi Nemmouche, who is believed to have fought in Syria, allegedly entered the Jewish Museum in Brussels and opened fire with an assault rifle. Among his possessions was a piece of cloth with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant written on it.

Even before the Syrian civil war, the Islamic State's predecessors were linked to attacks in Europe. In 2010, a Swedish national that had traveled to Mosul to join what was then called the Islamic State of Iraq, killed himself in a suicide bombing in Stockholm. And in 2007, the perpetrators of the so-called "Doctor's Plot" in the United Kingdom had phone numbers for operatives of the Islamic State of Iraq listed in their cell phones. A U.S. intelligence official at the time characterized the plot as "AQI related, not AQI directed." Expect to see a future of jihadi plots in the West that are "Islamic State related, not Islamic State directed."

Whatever the threat to the West from the Islamic State, the threat to United States' interests in the Middle East is much more severe. In 2012, the Jordanian security services disrupted a plot by the Islamic State's predecessors to " launch near-simultaneous attacks on multiple civilian and government targets."[viii]

The plot was consistent with earlier efforts by the Islamic State's predecessor organizations to strike outside of its main area of operation, which illustrates a consistent focus on Jordan that informs my particular concern about attacks in that country today. Those historical attacks and plots include:

- A foiled chemical attack in Amman, Jordan, in April 2004;
- An foiled suicide attack in December 2004 on the Karamah border crossing between Iraq and Jordan;
- A rocket attack against U.S. ships it the Jordanian port of Aqaba and the neighboring Israeli town of Eilat;
- The tactically successful and strategically disastrous (for al-Qaeda) strike in November 2005 on Western-owned hotels in Amman, Jordan.

- Lastly, al-Qaeda in Iraq claimed a single strike against Northern Israel from Southern Lebanon in December 2005.

What are the Islamic State's Weaknesses?

The Islamic State has three structural weaknesses:

- First, much of its power in Iraq depends on a political alliance with other Sunni factions—but the basis of that alliance is opposition to the current regime in Baghdad rather than a shared vision of governance in the future. Sunnis in Iraq turned on the Islamic State's predecessors in 2006 and 2007, and given appropriate guarantees they may again. This is increasingly likely as the Sunni military advance stalls, which it has. The Sunni coalition in Iraq that includes the Islamic State is unlikely to conquer Baghdad, though it is very capable of sustained terrorist campaign against both Baghdad and the Shiite heartland of Iraq. A stalled military campaign will refocus attention within the coalition on governance and intra-coalition power-sharing, and this is likely to contribute to splits in the relationship.
- Second, the Islamic State's declaration of a Caliphate is unpopular even within the jihadi community. Many senior jihadi ideologues have condemned the so-called Caliphate, much as they condemned the original declaration of an Islamic State in 2006. Unfortunately, the Islamic State has been able to mitigate this problem with its success on the ground. Power trumps ideology and the specter of the Islamic State's de facto authority in Iraq and Syria means that despite criticism from senior jihadi clerics, the group can still recruit successfully.
- Third, jihadis do not have a strong track record of governance. From Algeria to Afghanistan, jihadis have squandered military gains by failing to govern effectively—and the specter of these failures hangs over the Islamic State.

Conclusion

I wish I had better news to deliver today. But despite the Islamic State's weaknesses, it has the strength to remain a significant threat to U.S. interests for the foreseeable future. You have likely noticed that despite my effort to focus narrowly on the Islamic State, definitive answers inevitably require looking at the region more holistically. The Islamic State's strength is derived from the chaos caused by our inability to resolve a whole range of related challenges—including whether to oust Bashar al-Assad, how to balance our concern about Iranian influence with the threat from Sunni jihadi groups, and even the degree to which jihadis will attempt to capitalize on the current violence in Israel and Gaza. I have not attempted to answer all of those questions in my prepared testimony, but I hope to have a productive discussion that sheds some light on these issues as well.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I am happy to answer any questions.

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[i] Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura "Foreign Jihadis Fighting in Syria Pose Risk to West" *The New York Times* May 29, 2014

[ii] Brian Fishman "Redefining the Islamic State: The Fall and Rise of the Islamic State of Iraq" *The New America Foundation* August 2011. Figures derived from the now-defunct National Counterterrorism Center WITS database.

[iii] Joseph Felter and Brian Fishman "Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records" *The Combating Terrorism Center at West Point* December 2007

[iv] According to senior al-Qaeda leaders, the ISI's political authority extended to Iraq and "its surroundings to the extent possible," a framing that logically includes portions of Syria and Jordan. Atiyah Abd al-Rahman "Atiyatallah Congratulates the Islamic State" *Jihadist Websites* January 5, 2007

[v] Aaron Zelin "ICSR Insight: Up to 11,000 foreign fighters in Syria; steep rise among Western Europeans" *International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation* December 17, 2013

[vi]Thomas Hegghammer "Should I Stay or Should I Go" *American Political Science Review* (107:1 pp 1-15) February 2013

[vii] Raffael Pantucci "Mehdi Nemmouche and Syria: Europe's Foreign Fighter Problem" *War on the Rocks* June 11, 2014

[viii] Joby Warwick and Taylor Luck "Jordan Disrupts Major al-Qaeda Terrorist Plot" *The Washington Post* October 21, 2012

Brian Fishman

Brian Fishman is a Counterterrorism Research Fellow with the International Studies Program at the New America Foundation. Fishman previously served as the Director of Research for the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point and was a professor in the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy. Fishman is the author of a number of studies on terrorism and al-Qaeda, including seminal investigations of al-Qaeda's foreign fighters in Iraq and Iran's multifaceted power projection strategy in Iraq, including support for Shia militias fighting U.S. troops. *Fault Lines in Global Jihad: Organizational, Strategic, and Ideological Fissures*, a volume he co-edited with Assaf Moghadam, was named one of the top books for understanding terrorist recruitment.

Fishman is a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations and was a founding editor of the CTC Sentinel, a leading professional journal on terrorism. He has taught as an adjunct professor in Georgetown's School of Foreign Service and Columbia's School of International and Public Affairs. Before joining the CTC, Fishman was the Foreign Affairs/Defense Legislative Assistant for Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey.

Fishman holds a Masters in International Affairs (MIA) from Columbia University and a B.A. from the University of California Los Angeles.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(5), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 113th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness. This form is intended to assist witnesses appearing before the House Committee on Armed Services in complying with the House rule. Please note that a copy of these statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the witness's personal privacy (including home address and phone number) will be made publicly available in electronic form not later than one day after the witness's appearance before the committee.

Witness name: Brian Fishman

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

__Individual

_X__Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented: International Security Program at the New America Foundation

FISCAL YEAR 2014

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2013

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

FISCAL YEAR 2012

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
N/A			

Federal Contract Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of contracts (including subcontracts) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal contracts are held:

Current fiscal year (2014): N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal contract(s) (for example, ship construction, aircraft parts manufacturing, software design, force structure consultant, architecture & engineering services, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal contracts held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal Grant Information: If you or the entity you represent before the Committee on Armed Services has grants (including subgrants) with the federal government, please provide the following information:

Number of grants (including subgrants) with the federal government:

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Federal agencies with which federal grants are held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

List of subjects of federal grants(s) (for example, materials research, sociological study, software design, etc.):

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

Aggregate dollar value of federal grants held:

Current fiscal year (2014):_N/A_____;
Fiscal year 2013:_____;
Fiscal year 2012:_____.

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